

**HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2020/21**



Your Parish Councillors



Larry Abraham
(Vice Chairman)



Chris Alford



Sheila Bennett



Penny Cole



Perry Cole



Lesley Driscoll



David Graeme



Fiona Hughes



Mally Malham



Matthew Mohr



Anne Oxtoby
(Chairman)



Ian Ross



Vince 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: mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk or by telephone: 01474 709441.

The Annual Report is printed and published by Hartley Parish Council

Chairman's Report

Dear Resident,

My report this year is rather different from previous ones.

Covid -19 has governed all our activities and meetings this year.

Full or partial lockdowns were in place for about 23 weeks.

The Council business did, however, continue. All our committee meetings have been run virtually using 'Zoom'.

Our facilities have been closed for much of the year and when allowed to re-open, the numbers attending were restricted.

Thankfully, our open spaces were available for the limited exercise that was allowed and they were used by many more residents than in normal times. I discovered, as many others did, places and walks in Hartley that I had not seen before. I also met and chatted with many residents (at an appropriate distance of course).

Our Clerks, Helen and Jane, had to cope with working separately while dealing with the mass of rules and regulations that were issued by Government to deal with hire of halls, open spaces and playgrounds.

Also in arranging for Manor Field Burial Ground to be opened, as the Burial Ground next to the Church is now closed.

My grateful thanks to them for managing so well.

A special mention and thanks to Councillors Penny and Perry Cole for co-ordinating the Volunteer network set up to help Hartley Residents who needed extra help during the Pandemic.

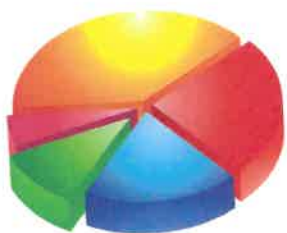
I would also like to thank all our Councillors for their work and support through this difficult year. In particular my thanks to Annette Ewing who resigned in June 2020 and Matt Mohr who resigned in March 2021 both due to work commitments.

We welcomed Fiona Hughes who was co-opted as a councillor in September.

I commend the Committee reports to you.

Anne Oxtoby, Chairman of the Council.

Finance Committee



An extraordinary year for us all! This was also a challenging year for our finances.

Although the Precept Income was unaffected, our ancillary income was much reduced. A grant from Sevenoaks District Council of £10,000 was given to us, which was gratefully received, as it helped to bolster our depleted receipts. On the expenditure side we tightly controlled costs. A few projects that we had planned were either considerably scaled back, such as the 75th Anniversary Celebrations for the end of World War II or delayed into 2021/22, for example, the further refurbishment of the Village Hall, completion of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment and fencing at the entrance to Gorse Wood, not finished due to the newly installed gate being stolen.

The Council's accounts for the year to 31 March 2021 are set out in pages 5 and 6. In this year there is a surplus, as income exceeded expenditure by £18,433. This has increased our reserves at year end, which was not what we planned. In 2021/22 we expect to start work on the Neighbourhood Plan which it is anticipated will cost around £24,000 over probably a three-year period. We also need to spend a considerable amount of money on resurfacing the car park at Manor Field now that the New Burial Ground is open.

Our biggest cost in any year are Staff costs. Our two excellent staff have been considerably stretched keeping up with the ever-changing Covid regulations during the year. It has been a difficult time. Our thanks, as always, to them for their hard work and diligence.

The Finance 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 2019/20 were approved by the Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2020 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.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr C Alford, Mrs S Bennett (Chairman), *Mrs A Oxtoby, and Mr V Sewell *ex officio

Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee

Over the course of the year both the Hartley Burial Ground and the Old Garden of Remembrance have closed for any more burials and interments of ashes. Interments will continue to take place in the New Garden of Remembrance.

Any future burials will take place in Manor Field Burial Ground, which is adjacent to the existing burial ground and behind the sports pavilion.

The area is ready to use and the Council are looking to resurface the car park and also provide a footpath from the old burial ground to the Manor Field burial ground.

There have been 4 burials and 6 interments of ashes this year. The current Burial Ground is now closed.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mrs P Cole (Chairman), Mr P Cole, *Mrs A Oxtoby and Mr I Ross. *ex officio

Northfield Management Committee

Northfield, 68 acres of open space and woodland, lies between Hartley and New Ash Green and is jointly managed by Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley Parish Councils.

What a blessing it has been to all our residents during this Covid year. Even more people have found it an enjoyable space to use for walks, meeting others outside when permitted; for dog walkers and horse riders as well.

There has been the occasional vandalism in Barnett's wood, some misuse of the space by motor cyclists and damage to a gate when thieves broke in to steal Haylage.

Some large Ash and Oak branches were brought down in the storms but generally the woods and fields are doing well. The bee walks are still finding many bees and the hay crops producing fair yields with little ragwort.

We continue to monitor the trees with regular inspections and trimming of hedges each autumn.

Post Brexit, we are still receiving funding from 'Natural England' so the Parish councils have only needed to contribute a nominal sum.

Members of the Northfield Management Committee:

Councillors; Mr D Graeme, Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr V Sewell and 3 Members from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

**Hartley Parish Council
Income & Expenditure
Account**

01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2020		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2021
£	<u>Income</u>	£
133,697	Precept	137,773
14,370	Income	134
6,121	General Costs	16,457
8,645	Burial Grounds	6,295
930	Allotments	922
3,755	Open Spaces	885
4,557	Manor Field Pavilion	560
<u>172,075</u>		<u>163,026</u>
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
71,684	Staff Costs	77,888
19,618	General Costs	14,678
9,645	Office Costs	6,575
11,738	Burial Grounds	5,016
872	Allotments	1,813
71,436	Open Spaces	32,603
11,966	Manor Field Pavilion	6,000
0	Northfield	20
2,820	Youth Services	0
<u>199,780</u>		<u>144,593</u>
	<u>General Fund</u>	
155,510	Opening Balance	169,653
172,075	Plus: Income for Year	163,026
327,585		332,679
199,780	Less: Expenditure for Year	144,593
127,805		188,085
41,848	Transfer to/from Reserves	5,247
<u>169,653</u>	Closing Balance	<u>193,332</u>

Hartley Parish Council Balance Sheet
31/03/2021

(Last) Year Ended
31st March 2020

(Current) Year Ended 31st
March 2021

£	LONG TERM ASSETS	£
0		0
<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>
	CURRENT ASSETS	
550	Debtors	650
6,250	VAT Control A/C	3,257
0	Prepayments	105
9,102	Current Bank Account	26,720
164,396	Business Saver Account	91,173
1	Petty Cash	1
75,592	Unity Bank Current Account	70,096
0	Nationwide	85,030
<u>255,890</u>		<u>277,031</u>
<u>255,890</u>	TOTAL ASSETS	<u>277,031</u>
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
934	Creditors	1,380
10,985	Accruals	13,247
<u>11,919</u>		<u>14,627</u>
<u>243,972</u>	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	<u>262,404</u>
	Represented by:	
169,653	General Reserves	193,332
43,679	EMR Capital Reserve	43,679
10,000	HVH Earmarked Reserve	10,000
2,675	New Burial Ground Reserve	2,255
3,889	CIL Receipts A	3,889
8,090	CIL Receipts B	8,090
5,986	VE Day 75th Anniversary	0
0	EMR Neighbourhood Plan	1,159
<u>243,972</u>		<u>262,404</u>

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/03/2021 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

Despite Coronavirus, this committee has continued to meet regularly via 'Zoom' in order to continue managing the facilities which are the responsibility of the Parish Council. These include the Hartley allotments, Manor Field - including the cricket and football pitches, the Pavilion, Gorse Wood, Hoselands Green, Rectory Meadow, Longfield Hill, Billings Hill Shaw, Hartley Woods and the three playgrounds which have been open in line with government guidelines. For everyone's safety all of the public areas are routinely risk assessed to ensure they are appropriately maintained. During this difficult time it has been noted that these open spaces have been extensively used and enjoyed by residents. Our thanks go to our main Contractor, Mr. Munday for maintaining these areas for the last 20+ years.

The woodland trees are a vital part of our village heritage and managing them is a particularly important task as we seek to maintain their preservation and ensure that damaged trees are dealt with. Ash dieback has been a particular problem in the past year which has meant a number of trees have had to be severely pruned or removed. This is unfortunate and also costly but necessary, to reduce any risk to the public.

At the Hartley allotments, additional space has been created by the clearing of a significant amount of rubbish and the necessary removal of some large trees. Any resident interested in an allotment plot should contact the Parish office on 01474 709441.

In order to reduce fly tipping and access to motorbikes in Gorse Wood, a new 20m boundary fence and gate were being installed. This has unfortunately now been delayed due to the overnight theft of the new gate and has resulted in £600 additional cost. Work will recommence as soon as security measures have been considered.

Unfortunately the virus has curtailed a number of the usual activities and events at Manor Field and the Pavilion including the cricket and football, although the costs associated with running these facilities are still necessary. However it is anticipated that subject to government guidance,

the Pavilion will be available again for business or private hire, which is managed through the Parish Office.

Discussions are currently taking place with contractors to consider improving the car park surface at Manor Field, particularly as this will also be a main access point to the new burial ground.

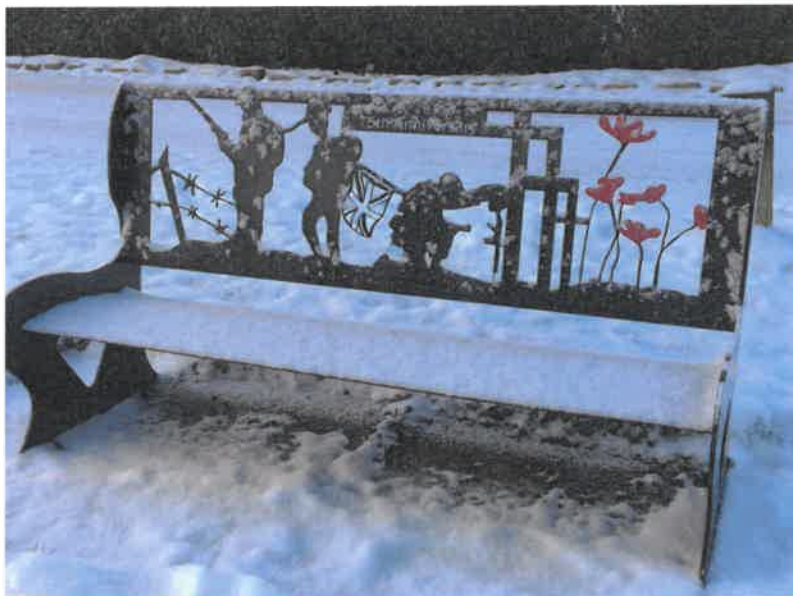
Concerns were expressed to the Parish Council by residents regarding the damaged paving at Cherry Trees shops and contact was subsequently made with the landlord and KCC which resulted in repair work being carried out.

Following a request by the WI to celebrate their centenary, it was agreed that they will kindly donate and install a new bench on the Hartley Memorial Green and a tree on Hoselands Green.

The Amenities Committee and the Parish Office staff work to ensure that Hartley continues to be a pleasant place to live.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors: *Mr L Abraham, Mrs S Bennett, Mrs L Driscoll, Mr D Graeme (Chairman), Mrs F Hughes, Mr M Malham, Mr M Mohr, *Mrs A Oxtoby and Mr V Sewell *ex officio



General Purposes Committee

This Committee deals with a variety of matters including Highway consultations and youth issues, together with the administrative arrangements of the Council and communications.

Due to the Covid restrictions, the work of the Committee was curtailed and it only met on 3 occasions, when the main issues discussed were as follows:-

1. Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the end of WW2

Due to the Coronavirus restrictions, the arrangements made by the Council to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day at Manor Field on the 5th May were cancelled and a restricted service was held at the War Memorial. A similar service was also held at the War Memorial, to commemorate VJ Day on the 15th August.

The Council did, however, purchase a specially made commemorative bench seat, which has been installed adjacent to the War Memorial. This replaced one of the existing wooden seats which, was refurbished and installed on Hoselands Green adjacent to the bus stop.

2. Remembrance Day Service – Sunday 8th November 2020

This service went ahead as planned and although there were a number of residents in attendance, the restrictions on social distancing were observed.

3. Highway Matters

The speed of traffic along Ash Road continues to be a concern to many residents and the Parish Council has made further representations to the Police to enforce the 30mph speed limit. After a few teething problems, the new light controlled crossing near the junction with Park Field is now working properly.

The new Village entry signs are also now in place at both ends of Ash Road. The highways in the Parish are the responsibility of the Kent County Council and the Parish Council is able to submit proposals for inclusion in a Highway Improvement Plan for the area. During the year the Council submitted the following requests for works which it is understood have been approved.

(a) signs in Castle Hill and Hartley Bottom Road to warn about the absence of footways and that there may be pedestrians in the road and, in the case of Castle Hill, to also discourage the road being used by lorries.

(b) the resurfacing of Ash Road. This is included in the next 2 year programme of work.

One of the proposals submitted in the previous year, namely a warning of a narrow road with the likelihood of pedestrians and horses in Church Road has resulted in the installation of warning signs.

If residents have suggestions for works or improvements to the highways please send them to the Parish Council and, if they are supported they will be submitted to the Kent County Council.

4. Youth Matters.

Very little has happened on a new approach to youth issues in the Parish. The Kent County Youth Service were to provide a street based 48 week service in Hartley but this was postponed due to Covid 19. A more limited service was provided during the summer by West Kent Housing Association and enquiries will be pursued to resurrect the new approach once circumstances allow.

5. Mobile Safety Camera.

The Parish Council is currently examining the viability of acquiring some cameras which could be used at various locations to protect the safety of parishioners and protect property from random rubbish dumping.

6. Review of Public Rights of Way in Hartley.

Most of the footpaths which cross fields and woods are included on the Definitive Public Rights Of Way Map and are therefore protected from closure. It is understood that the Government is intending to close applications for historic paths to be added to the Definitive Map in January 2026. Users should ensure that all such routes which are useful, or potentially useful, are claimed before that date.

The Council is aware of several requests to classify the footpath leading into Hartley Wood as a public right of way as it is well used by many residents. The Council would welcome any applications to include unregistered footpaths on the official Map. A copy of the Definitive Map is displayed at the Parish Office in the Library.

7. Queen's Platinum Jubilee

National celebrations for this event will take place over the first weekend of June 2022, which the Government has extended to 4 days. The Parish Council has decided to host a suitable event for the Parish, on one of the dates, at the Manor Field Recreation Ground and this will be developed with local organisations.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr C Alford (Chairman), Mrs P Cole, Mr P Cole, Mrs L Driscoll, Mr D Graeme, *Mrs A Oxtoby & Mr V Sewell
*ex officio

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 10.00a.m. and the meetings are usually held at Hartley Library, Ash Road. Due to the COVID restrictions, meetings were held remotely via 'Zoom' instead and plans were looked at online replacing the site visits that usually take place.

Residents' Views - Notice of the meetings are displayed on the Parish notice board outside Hartley Library. All residents are welcome to attend the meetings via Zoom (or in person when meetings are permitted again) and are given an opportunity to express their views on any application, before the Committee reaches its 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 2020 and 31st March 2021, the Parish Council was consulted on 61 planning applications. No objection was raised to 38 of these and objections were raised to 22, with no comment on 1. The District Council gave a decision contrary to the Parish Council's views on 12 applications, all of which were delegated decisions. 5 decisions were taken to appeal by the applicants. 2 were dismissed, 1 was granted and 2 are still awaiting a decision.

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

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

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:

Councillors: *Mr L Abraham (Chairman), Mr C Alford, Mrs S Bennett,

*Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr I Ross & Mr V Sewell *ex officio

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: mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk, for the Pavilion or villagehall@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk, for the Village Hall.