



HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24



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

Chairmans Report 2024

Dear Resident

Our Council was, with the exception of Chris Alford, elected last May.

Before deciding to step down, Chris had been a Councillor since 2003 and we thank him for his many contributions to the work of Hartley Parish Council. He continues, however, to support Hartley as Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

We co-opted David Conroy as a Councillor in June and he has taken on the role of Councillor enthusiastically.

The Council arranged to celebrate King Charles III Coronation by donating a friendship bench to each of our two schools, Our Lady of Hartley and Hartley Primary School.

The Council appointed a consultant to respond to the Sevenoaks Local Plan and the work of Hartley's Neighbourhood plan continues.

Our hardworking staff have been unable to keep up with the increasing bureaucracy from central government and audit rules and it was decided to employ a Clerk's Assistant for 2 days a week to help with the day to day running of the office and to enable it to be open 5 days a week.

My thanks to all the Councillors for their contributions and to the Clerks Helen, Jane and Fiona for their hard work.

Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Council's accounts for the year to 31st March 2024 are set out in pages 5 and 6. In this year there is a deficit, as expenditure exceeded income by £25,015.

This has decreased our reserves at year end although most of the overspend has been covered using earmarked Reserves. The net movement at the Year End is a reduction in the general reserve of £4,481

In 2023/24 we continued work on the Neighbourhood Plan which it is anticipated will cost in the region of £15,000-£25,000 over probably a three year period.

An unauthorised encampment at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground caused repair and restriction works to be undertaken. Also, repeated vandalism to the playground equipment and subsequent reinstatement has been a significant cost.

The resurfacing of Manor Field car park was cancelled to save a projected £30,000 as only a limited amount of CIL money had been provided by Sevenoaks District Council for the next financial year.

Our long serving Groundsman for the Burial Grounds is retiring and it is anticipated that an increase is expected for a replacement contract.

For the year to March 2025, the precept was set at £188,797, an increase of £23,407 to ensure a cost neutral budget, unless unforeseen price rises occur.

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 2022/23 were approved by the council at its Annual Meeting in May 2023 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.

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

Youth

West Kent Housing Association has continued to deliver detached work in Hartley. They are building and maintaining relations with our young people by assessing wellbeing and supporting where needed.

Millwall Community Trust provided 12 weeks of free football sessions, funded by Hartley Parish Council, at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground which proved very popular.

Family Fun Day

We had two Family Fun Days this year. One was funded by Sevenoaks District Council and the other by the Parish Council. These were held at Woodland Avenue recreation ground on 25th July and 8th August 2023. The July event was hugely successful with a large turnout. Sadly, the August event, although successful, had less attendees due to bad weather.

Remembrance Sunday - 12th November 2023

The ceremony at the Hartley Memorial Green was well attended by the Royal British Legion, local Scout and Guide groups, our local Community groups such as the WI and residents. The W.I. provided the decorations for the green as well as refreshments at the Fawkham and Hartley Church Centre, after the service.

Hartley Herald Newsletter

Our newsletter has been revamped and is now in A4 format which hopefully makes it easier to read.

Review of Public Rights of Way

Work is in progress to have the footpath, leading from Beechlands Close into Hartley Wood, classified as a Public Right of Way.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr D Conroy, Mr J Colwell,
*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 7 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 3 burials and 7 interments of ashes this year.

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
01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024**

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2023		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2024
£	<u>Income</u>	£
137,768	Precept	160,390
31,469	Income	3,902
4,987	General Costs	11,833
0	Office Costs	58
7,750	Burial Grounds	4,120
1,201	Allotments	1,247
3,570	Open Spaces	4,153
5,048	Manor Field Pavilion	5,222
0	Hartley Village Hall	187
3,700	NMC Income	3,248
195,492		194,359
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
83,725	Staff Costs	92,127
34,212	General Costs	36,212
6,395	Office Costs	7,176
6,454	Burial Grounds	10,084
993	Allotments	796
33,936	Open Spaces	45,545
7,216	Manor Field Pavilion	14,807
10	Northfield	500
692	Youth Services	2,993
0	Hartley Village Hall	245
1,069	NMC General	1,493
2,529	NMC Maintenance	7,263
166	NMC Projects	133
177,396		219,374
	<u>General Fund</u>	
112,461	Opening Balance	111,555
195,492	Plus: Income for Year	194,359
307,953		305,914
177,396	Less: Expenditure for Year	219,374
130,557		86,541
19,002	Transfer to/from Reserves	(20,534)
111,555	Closing Balance	107,074

Hartley Parish Council Balance Sheet
31/03/2024

(Last) Year Ended
31st March 2023

(Current) Year Ended
31st March 2024

£		£
0	LONG TERM ASSETS	0
0		0
	CURRENT ASSETS	
763	Debtors	238
2,726	VAT Control A/C	2,752
347	NMC VAT Control	1,252
35,356	Current Bank Account	33,814
94,224	Business Saver Account	112,193
73,446	Unity Bank Current Account	28,894
85,541	Nationwide	87,165
6,769	NMC Current Account	749
7,537	NMC Business Reserve A/C	7,628
306,710		274,685
306,710	TOTAL ASSETS	274,685
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
504	Creditors	2,897
0	NMC Creditors	792
15,060	Accruals	5,212
176	NMC Accruals	0
305	Credit card y/e balance	283
150	Receipts in Advance	0
16,194		9,183
290,516	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	265,501
	Represented by:	
111,555	General Reserves	107,074
43,679	EMR Capital Reserve	43,679
5,570	HVH Earmarked Reserve	5,570
719	New Burial Ground Reserve	0
49,750	Manor Field Car Park	48,200
14,036	CIL Receipts A	2,437
28,126	CIL Receipts B	22,841
336	EMR Local Plan	336
22,204	EMR Neighbourhood Plan	20,823
10,402	NMC General Reserve	10,402
1,639	NMC Earmarked Reserves	1,639
2,500	NMC Future Planting Reserve	2,500
290,516		265,501

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/03/2024 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 10.00 a.m. and the meetings are usually held at Hartley Library, Ash Road.

Residents' Views - Notice of the meetings are displayed on the Parish notice board 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 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 2023 and 31st March 2024, the Parish Council was consulted on 43 planning applications. No objection was raised to 31 of these, objections were raised to 11 and no comment was made on 1. 4 applications were withdrawn and 4 applications have yet to be decided.

The District Council gave a decision contrary to the Parish Council's views on 8 applications, all of which were delegated decisions. 6 decisions were taken to appeal by the applicants. 1 has been allowed, 2 have been dismissed and 3 are 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 J Colwell, Mrs L Driscoll

*Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr B Ramsay, Mr I Ross and 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, including the cricket and football pitches, maintaining the Pavilion, carrying out essential tree work and grass cutting in Gorse Wood, Hoselands Green, Rectory Meadow, Longfield Hill, Billings Hill Shaw, Hartley Wood and three playgrounds. Football and cricket continue to be popular activities using Manor Field and this year, the council supplied pitches for three football clubs.

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. The overall cost for this was £8,400.

Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground continues to see football training for youngsters and teens. This again has been provided by Millwall Football Club Community Trust in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and the Parish Council. The Thursday evening sessions have been very well attended by boys and girls of all ages and abilities, making full use of having professional coaches offering their help and advice.

The trees and woods in Hartley continue to be a vital part of our village heritage and managing them is an important task to maintain their preservation and ensure damaged or diseased trees are dealt with for the benefit and safety of residents particularly due to Ash "dieback" and storm damage. This has come at a cost this year in the region of £2,675 and as a result the Parish Council will not cut back or remove healthy trees unless advised to by their Tree Risk Assessment Consultant. Unfortunately these wooded areas also attract a large amount of anti-social behaviour involving the illegal use of motorised vehicles, usually gaining access by damaging fences and gates at an extra cost to the residents of £1,400. Fly Tipping also continues to be a 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,

both household and trade, is disposed of by proper means or by using a correctly licensed waste carrier. The cost of removing fly tipping this year has been £150.00.

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 the chalk meadow. Residents are actively encouraged to help out on workdays, advertised in The Hartley Herald and on the Parish Council website.

Due to last April's Unauthorised Encampment at Hoselands Green and later at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground, it has been necessary to review the security of access points to these and other sites in the Parish and as such, Woodland Avenue has seen the building of a bund adjacent to the perimeter fence and the inclusion of a collapsible locking bollard in the vehicle access gateway.

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 used by residents of all ages for many leisure activities – walking, birdwatching, horse riding, picnicking etc.

KCC supplied over 2000 'whips' and several volunteers have planted them round the margins of Northfield. These will grow into mature trees to surround the open space.

We have started our Woodland Management Plan by coppicing a quarter of New House Shaw. This will continue by coppicing another quarter in 4 or 5 years time and so on until all has been coppiced.

A local farmer takes a hay crop from Northfield in the summer.

There has been an illegal encampment in Barnetts wood. Criminals broke through fences to access the rear of properties on Ash Road.

These two issues have cost about £2000 to remedy.

We have placed two interpretive panels to aid understanding of walking and riding routes and the wooded and wild flower areas.

The Committee has also agreed to allow a small parking area adjacent to the allotments to aid access for the allotment tenants.

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.