

EAST HOATHLY WITH HALLAND PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2009

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the 114th Annual Parish Meeting. Firstly, I would like to thank those councillors who left us during the year – Mervyn Barnes, Andrea Durnan and Don McInnes. Mervyn and Andrea had served on the Council for some six years and since March 2006 Mervyn had been Chairman. My thanks go to all these councillors but in particular to Mervyn for all his efforts for the Parish.

I must also thank two longer-standing members for all their efforts, namely Susan Cole and Roger More. All of these people have given their time free of charge for the Parish and have worked hard on your behalf.

We have had a lot of new blood into the council this year; John Graham, Peter French, Bryan Kidd, Jenny Vaughan and Susan Whitehead – all of whom I shall ask to introduce themselves in a minute. At the time of writing this report we currently have one vacancy for a Parish Councillor, however we do have two very able volunteers, so I hope at the village meeting that I will also be introducing to you our newest councillor which will mean that for the first time in a long period that we will have a full complement of councillors.

I have been very pleased with the strong interest shown in the Council this year by many of the residents and it is particularly gratifying to me that we now have an even representation between Halland and East Hoathly councillors which roughly reflects the two populations. Our new councillors bring with them some extremely good experience, John Graham has a good knowledge of the law and is heavily involved with the Twinning Society, Bryan Kidd has a background in local governance and has also been a JP.

Having Peter French on board will also be a tremendous asset. At 23 he has much greater authority than the rest of the Council to represent the views and ideas of our younger parishioners. His knowledge on agricultural matters and a long family history within the Parish will be of particular value. Hopefully this might also encourage other young villagers to participate more fully in the running of their villages.

Also on my list to thank are Barby Dashwood-Hall (our District Councillor, who is here tonight), John Garvican, our County Councillor, Lindsay Wiggins (School Governor Representative), Trina Hunt (Responsible Financial Officer) and Vic Tidswell soldiering on as our Internal Auditor.

A massive thank you must go to our Parish Clerk, Ann Newton, without whom we could not function. She has a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge and we appreciate her guidance as well as the hard work that she does on behalf of our community.

Update on Activities reported on last Year

• **Ransom Strip – Church Marks Lane.**

Having pursued a full investigation of this, we have been advised not to pursue this further. It seems that we would be very unlikely to be successful in obtaining further funds for the community and even if we were successful in obtaining a review, such a review would not result in funds being redirected to the Parish budget, but would cost the villages a huge amount of money in legal fees. With great regret the Parish Council have therefore decided not to take this matter further.

• **Village Gateway.**

I am pleased to be able to report that the Village Gateway, designed and constructed by Keith Pettit, has been installed at the London Road entrance to the East Hoathly and is a superb

addition to the village attractions. We are very lucky to have such a fine craftsman in the village and I would encourage you to also view the web site (villagegateway.co.uk).

New Activities

- **Provision of allotments.**

As a Parish Council it is always difficult to steer a path that pleases everyone in the village. We are under an obligation to provide allotments to our parishioners who request them, however there is limited land in the community that is owned by the Parish Council that is suitable for this type of use, does not damage local wildlife and pleases the local residents. A tall order indeed! At the last Parish Meeting we had a request for the provision of allotments. This has raised interest from 20 parishioners. The only land that the Parish Council has which could be utilised for the use of allotments is at the rear of Thomas Turner Drive, near the Long Pond. Understandably a number of residents are not happy about the possibility of using this site, although others have responded enthusiastically.

We have to drive a path that reflects the views of as many parishioners as possible and I have been interested in the debate that has ensued. It has been brought to the attention of the Council that this area was in the past used as orchards. There has also been a suggestion that perhaps this land could be used for a village garden, not dissimilar to the vegetable and flower gardens that which you might find at some of the larger houses that are open to the public. There has been support for this idea from local ecologists who would be involved with the project to ensure that this unique area was protected, whilst at the same time providing an area which will enhance the village amenities, be a place to sit and to educate our children in an attractive and peaceful space.

- **Management of the play area, amenity grassland and woodlands on the Church Marks Lane development.**

The Council was asked if they would like to take over the running of the play area, surrounding grassland and a small area of woodland adjacent to the new development. Having investigated the management plans which have been laid down for these areas, the Council has taken the view that as the recreation area is in reality only likely to be used by the residents of this small part of the parish, the management of this area would be best accommodated by the developers in conjunction with a residents association.

The grassland had a very restrictive use and is mainly going to be used by the residents of the new development. This being so the Parish Council felt that there was very little value that it could add to the strict management plans for this land and we have therefore also decided that the management of this land will be best suited to be left to the developers and residents association.

The woodland on the other hand was seen to be of wider benefit to the Parish. After an almost full contingent of the Council walked around the wood one wet and muddy morning the Council commissioned a report to assess the viability of the management plan and to evaluate whether the commuted sum on offer to look after the wood would be sufficient to allow us to effectively manage the area without undue cost to the Parishioners.

We felt that this area could be an asset to the whole of the community, not just for protection of wildlife, but also for recreation and education and this would be beneficial to the Parish. This being so it has been decided that we the Parish Council will take over management of this part of the land for the benefit of the community.

- **Provision of a Youth Shelter**

Following on from the provision of the new play equipment in the War Memorial Sports Ground, the Council has been asked by the young people in the village to consider providing a youth shelter for teenagers to use to socialise in. The Parish Council supports this project and is investigating possible sites and designs for shelters, however we would like the input and involvement of the Parish teenagers as it is for their use. So far this has not been forthcoming and in order that we can progress this I would like to ask local teenagers to come forward and talk to us.

- **Speed Camera and Speed Limit in Halland**

I am delighted to report that the speed limit through Halland is to be reduced to 30 mph in the very near future. We understand that this means we will lose the speed camera, which has undoubtedly prevented accidents, reduced speed and saved lives. The Parish Council did argue against the removal of the camera, which is to be replaced by a high visibility sign on the opposite side of the road. Whilst we welcome the reduction in speed limit, we do think that the removal of the camera and its replacement with the flashing sign will be of detriment to the villagers in Halland.

- **Recycling**

We have asked Wealden to look into a cycling venue for Halland, but as always space is limited and WDC are looking into this

- **Pathways and Footpaths**

During the year the Council learnt that ESCC will receive £131,000 from the two housing developments in East Hoathly to be spent on sustainable transport needs. The County Council has agreed to discuss with the Parish how this money might be spent. We have suggested that a footpath by the A22 in Halland or a cycle path between the two villages would be of benefit, particularly to the children in the Parish – for East Hoathly children accessing bus services in Halland and Halland children accessing the recreational facilities in East Hoathly. We have been advised that the County Council will consider these suggestions as part of their sustainable transport needs programme.

DAVID VAUGHAN

EAST HOATHLY WITH HALLAND PARISH COUNCIL
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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

War Memorial Sports Ground Trust

Firstly my thanks must go to Derek Keeley whose efforts we could not do without. Not only has he helped us to maintain the Pavilion but he has also constructed a new fence around Deep and Dangerous.

I am sure that everyone in the village has seen the new tennis courts and improvements to the floodlighting and fencing. This has all been funded by the Tennis Club and their members and I am sure that the Parish will join me in congratulating them on these improvements, which are an asset to the Parish.

The Carnival Society hosted a wet, but brilliant, fireworks celebration last year, which is a huge contribution in bringing together the residents of both Halland and East Hoathly. The Carnival Society has provided a new gate and bridge to the playing fields for use on carnival nights.

During the year work has been carried out on the surface of the car park. Please could I ask all residents and users of the fields to note that cars should not be driven across the fields as this can make the cricket and football playing surfaces dangerous.

- **Improvements to the Pavilion.**

Despite Derek's best endeavours, we are aware that the Pavilion is old, cold and needs replacing, however in the short to medium term this is unlikely to happen. There are improvements that we can make to help the amenity more user friendly – a shower here a new heater there etc, but once again this will take money and with the pressures on peoples wallets at the present time we as a Council are not prepared to increase the precept burden on the Parish. However we would be interested in the views of parishioners and the clubs using the Pavilion about what can be done or any fund raising schemes that we can implement as a community.

Challenges and Opportunities for the future.

The Wealden 2011 – 2026 Local Development Framework includes plans for more housing in the District. However, we need to be alive to the challenges and opportunities that future proposals might bring. The Council is aware that the majority of residents would want us to oppose new development within both of the villages and we will strongly resist any plans to impose developments upon us. One of the lessons that we have learnt from the recent developments in East Hoathly, is that there comes a point where resistance is futile and at this point we must be ready to co-operate with the development to ensure that the Parish gains the maximum benefit.

DAVID VAUGHAN