

Hadlow Parish Council

Planning & Environment Committee Report to Annual Parish Meeting 2015

The Planning and Environment Committee of Hadlow Parish Council has two main functions.

Firstly it discusses planning applications for development within the parish, and comments on these planning applications to the Local Planning Authority, the District Council, on behalf of the Parish Council and Parishioners. Applications are dealt with both in the monthly meetings of the Committee and also at the meetings of the full Parish Council in order to provide the most effective and timely representation of parish views and recommendations to the Planning Authority.

Secondly, the Planning and Environment Committee deals with the wide range of open space and buildings that contribute to the environment of the Parish and which the Parish Council is involved with. These include:

Open spaces:

- Williams Field, including the football pitches and the play areas
- Signpost Field in Golden Green, including the play area
- Hadlow Cemetery
- St Marys Churchyard
- The Cricket Field
- Footpaths, including School Lane and the Access Trail
- The Allotments

At Williams Field there has been significant investment in new fencing along the boundary to the neighbouring field containing horses, and the new Skateboard Park has been very well used, Regular day to day maintenance and upgrades to the Williams Field area as a whole continues, including grass-cutting and landscape maintenance. Thanks also to the work of the pay-back team for their contribution. The Play Area at Signpost Field in Golden Green also continues to be well used, and regular maintenance carries on, including grass-cutting and maintenance.

Continued maintenance and improvements to the Hadlow cemetery have been made, including tree work, grass-cutting and the cleaning of the war memorial. The centennial display in the Old School Hall on Hadlow in the First World War emphasises the importance of our memorial. The standard of maintenance of the cemetery has been significantly improved over the past few years. The administration of interments and memorials in the cemetery is a very important part of the Parish work and requires a very high degree of both efficiency and sensitivity from the Parish Clerk and her team – thanks to them for their continued work in this area. The extension to the cemetery is a major project and the fencing and hedging are now in place with the plans for the paths now awaited. This extension will ensure the provision of this facility within the parish for the remainder of this century. The use of this area goes back to Roman times when cremation urns were buried here!

Hanging baskets for the centre of the village have again been organised for 2015, and a long-awaited replacement tree for the old Copper Beech by the Carpenters Lane junction has at last been planted by KCC Highways in fastigate form. The large Black Poplar tree has been pollarded, which will require regular repollarding on an approximately 5 year cycle, and possible re-alignment of the road markings at the junction. Tree work and other environmental maintenance continues in collaboration with the Church in St Mary's Churchyard, an integral part of the Village Centre Conservation Area. Work has also been done on the oak trees at the Cricket Club grounds in association with the Hadlow College arboriculture students who use them for tree climbing training and will continue in the coming year.

The Parish continues to work closely with the KCC Public Rights of Way Officer in order to ensure the maintenance of footpaths. Over the year there have been issues with overgrowth of vegetation, bridge replacement, slippery slopes and with dog-fouling. Where ownership of footpaths is not specifically assigned it remains the legal responsibility of the adjacent landowners to keep footpaths open and to prevent vegetation overgrowing the path, or highway as appropriate. The Access Trail installed by the Parish Council a few years ago continues to be particularly well used, but is likely to need attention in the future. The new walking leaflets organised by David Lavender and part-funded by the Parish are proving very popular. Parish and TMBC Councillors participated in the Countrywide Tidy-up initiative on the 21st March, which we hope will now become a well-publicised annual event in both Golden Green and Hadlow.

The issue of dog-fouling is clearly the responsibility of individual dog-owners, and offenders will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Please provide details of offences to the Parish office or the TMBC Dog Warden. New dog-bins continue to be installed if/where appropriate.

The Parish Allotments continue to provide opportunities for parishioners to grow their own vegetables and flowers. The Council maintains the infrastructure of the Allotments in association with the Allotment Association and its Chairman, and tree work as well as general maintenance continues.

After the hard winters of some previous years, the Council-organised volunteers were not required to clear snow from central areas of the village in 2014/15 but many thanks to the volunteers who remain ready to turn out each winter. More volunteers will no doubt be required for future years! The Council also continues to liaise with Kent Highways about the overall winter plan, including snow clearance and the gritting of roads and the repairing of pot holes, which again coped well with this year's demands. The new Christmas lights worked very well in Christmas 2014, and the Christmas Tree was again lovely! Plans for new Christmas lighting in Golden Green by the Golden Green Association for 2015 have been supported.

There was no repeat of the 2013/14 flooding in 2014/15, but planning for flood prevention resilience has been a strong focus of the last 12 months. The proposed improvements to the Flood Storage Area at Leigh are critical. The Environment Agency has cleared along the River Bourne near Golden Green and landowners have carried out other clearance and maintenance higher up the river. The Hadlow Parish Emergency Plan has been updated and commended. The Flood Wardens Scheme is being extended – volunteers to be Flood Wardens should contact the Parish Office initially to find out more about training for the scheme supported by KCC and TMBC.

The Hadlow Speedwatch was well supported last summer, and volunteers for this summer's activities to monitor traffic speed and improve road safety in the critical "hotspot" areas of the A26 through Hadlow, and Three Elms Lane through Golden Green are well advanced. If you are concerned about traffic speed PLEASE volunteer for this scheme, as it is no good just bemoaning accidents AFTER they happen – action is required to reduce traffic speed, and the Speedwatch scheme absolutely depends on volunteers to carry out speed monitoring in these areas. Speedwatch is vital in supplementing the Police's mobile speed camera presence which can only be on an occasional basis on the A26. Plans for a flashing speed indicator on the A26 facing in the Tonbridge direction in the region of the Carpenters Lane junction are being taken forward with KCC.

The big event for 2015 will be the Community Country Fayre at the Cricket Club on Sunday the 28th of June. Plans are well advanced, and enquiries should be made to the Cricket Club or the Parish office.

The Planning and Environment Committee has also been involved in a wide range of other consultations and other external activities, including liaising with Kent Highways, the new Solar Farm by Five Oak Green, the installation of faster Broadband across the Parish, and plans for the second runway at Gatwick Airport, as they affect Hadlow Parish. The TMBC Local Plan for the next 15 years is awaited towards the end of this year, as it may have significant implications for Hadlow Parish.

Buildings:

Old School Hall

Hadlow Medical Centre

Hadlow Community Pre-School

(The Parish Council is also the landlord for the Village Hall and the Hy-Arts Centre Building at Williams Field)

The Old School Hall is very well used by a range of Community Groups and bookings are very healthy. The lease for the Hadlow Medical Centre is being re-assigned to fit the composition of the new Medical Team – a very warm welcome to Dr. Jon Palin. The Parish Council continues to support the Medical Centre in providing a very valuable and local medical service to the village and community. The Hadlow Community Pre-School operated by Hadlow College continues to provide for the younger members of the Parish in the Old School Hall Annexe, but the current Annexe building is not getting any younger. A new lease for the Hadlow Village Hall and Hadlow Youth Centre at Williams Field is due to be issued. The Parish Council particularly wishes to support these facilities and would like to see significant future development in both buildings for the benefit of the entire community.

Summary

Thanks to Melanie and all the team for the work they do in the Parish Office for the village. Special thanks to all the members of the Planning and Environment Committee who turn out regularly and do all sorts of extra duties entirely on a voluntary basis, to help keep so many aspects of the village environment and facilities moving forward.

David Carey, Chairman, Planning and Environment Committee.