



# Hadlow Down Parish Council Annual Report

## Chairman's Statement

**This is the second annual report to you of the activities of the Council over the previous 12 months.**

**I have been Chairman now for just over a year and it seems to have been an eventful one! We have discovered over the year as we did the background work for the Community Centre that the Parish Council records from the past left a lot to be desired. A lot of our time this year has been spent in getting these correct and up-to-date.**

**During the year a new Councillor, Claire Emsden, was co-opted on to the Council but we are still 1 Councillor short of our correct number. We are not a political body and our aim is purely to do what is right for the Village and what we have been told that you, the villagers, want from us.**

**It is not "the Vicar of Dibley" but it can be fun and rewarding when things come to fruition. If you are interested, please give me a call or talk it over with one of the other Councillors or the Parish Clerk.**

**Sandra Richards  
Chairman**

## Your Annual Report

Last year we produced the first Annual Report and this was very well received to judge by the positive comments we received. We will now produce the report each year and in it try to highlight the things that have happened during the year and how we have spent the precept that comes from you via your Council tax. If you have any comments on the Report, or on any other aspects of the Parish Council's activities, please contact any of the Councillors or the Parish Clerk.

## Your Council

The Council meets every month on the first Tuesday of the month and meets in the Committee Room of the Village Hall. There may also be additional meetings if there are urgent planning matters or where a particular topic is too lengthy for the normal meeting. We are fairly strictly governed by law in the way we conduct our business and have standing orders which determine how we run the meetings. Within those standing orders we have set a time limit of two hours for our meetings as we feel that to expect people to give their best as the evening wears on is not fair on them or on the decisions needed.

As well as the Councillors, meetings are normally attended by our representatives from the District and County Councils as well as by our local police.

All Council meetings are open to the public unless there is a particular reason for a topic to be discussed in private. It is normally only personnel matters where this applies. At the start of each meeting there is the opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the Council but after this open question time the Council has to conduct its business without interruption.

Each year the Council raises the money it needs via your Council Tax. This is called the Precept and for Hadlow Down is about £7.40 per month per household. We maintained the precept for 2013/2014 at last year's level despite the need for unexpected high expenditure.

## What we are involved in

In last year's report, we set out the various areas in which we were involved and what had been happening in each area. The full details of the last 12 months are in the minutes of the Annual Meeting which were published in the May issue of the Parish Magazine and also appear on the Village Web-site. Rather than repeat these here we will just highlight some of the more important topics.

### Planning

The major issue to hit us this year was the Wealden District Council Strategic Plan and, in particular, the new 7km and 15km building limits. These limits are designed to protect the environment of the Ashdown Forest from the adverse effects of nitrogen deposition. The effect of them is that building within the limits is very strictly controlled and new building is unlikely to be approved although replacements for existing buildings may be allowed.

The most notable immediate effect is that our plans for a new Community Centre are less easy to get to fruition as even community buildings like those are affected by the new rules. However, our new East Sussex County Councillor, Roy Galley, has promised to support us in getting the new building we need.

### Neighbourhood Watch

Thankfully, Hadlow Down remains a very low crime area but it still pays to remain vigilant. Any issues are flagged on the website and in the Parish Magazine.

One of the benefits of our village is that despite being spread out over quite a large area people do tend to look after their neighbours and help in times of need. This doesn't mean that we can relax being vigilant but it does mean that we can feel that little bit safer.

# Contact us

## Parish Clerk

Helen Simpson-Wells

☎ 01435 860959

@ [clerk@hadlowdown.com](mailto:clerk@hadlowdown.com)

## Parish Councillors

### Chairman

Sandra Richards

☎ 01825 733848

@ [sandra.richards@hadlowdown.com](mailto:sandra.richards@hadlowdown.com)

*Planning and Public Transport*

### Vice Chairman

Graham Terry

☎ 01825 830530

@ [graham.terry@hadlowdown.com](mailto:graham.terry@hadlowdown.com)

*Playing Field, Burial Ground,  
Village Hall, Strengthening Local  
Relationships, New Community Centre,  
Newsletter*

Michael Lunn

☎ 07894 062727

@ c/o [clerk@hadlowdown.com](mailto:clerk@hadlowdown.com)

*Community Strategies, Environment Issues  
and Wealden District Association of Local  
Councils*

Damon Wellman

☎ 07774 619132

@ c/o [clerk@hadlowdown.com](mailto:clerk@hadlowdown.com)

*Neighbourhood Watch,  
Neighbourhood Policing Rural Panel  
and Joint Action Group*

Nathan James

☎ 07867 574207

@ c/o [clerk@hadlowdown.com](mailto:clerk@hadlowdown.com)

*Youth matters, Emergency Planning*

Clare Emsden

☎ 01825 733657

@ c/o [clerk@hadlowdown.com](mailto:clerk@hadlowdown.com)

*Highways, Footpaths and Rights of Way,  
Strengthening Local Relationships*

## Joint Action Group.

With other local Villages we meet regularly with Wealden District Council, Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, NHS East Sussex and Weald, Surrey and Sussex Probation, and East Sussex Fire and Rescue. These meetings are designed to prioritise the needs of the local communities as well as reviewing the performance of the various authorities. Damon Wellman is our representative on this Group.

## Emergency Planning

The Emergency Team, now led by Nathan James, is a sub-committee of the Parish Council. It meets regularly and has a plan formulated which can be brought into use very quickly if needed. Here we are talking about the type of situation where we would normally expect the emergency services to deal but where they are unable to because the emergency is too great and they are too stretched or where our local knowledge is crucial to them. Again, as in last year, the snow falls meant that we did use the plan to check on vulnerable residents. Much work is now being done by Nathan to update the plan to meet changing circumstances.

## Highways, Rights of Way & Footpaths

Some notable successes this year! Speeding continues to be of concern to the majority of villagers and the Police have been active on the A272 and have issued a number of speeding tickets. We have been particularly concerned about the speeds in School Lane. It is not always appreciated that there may be children about at various times during school hours as they go to outside activities. So we are not just concerned with the early morning and mid-afternoon times. In addition, the School Lane/A272 junction continued to give concerns because of the parking close to the junction.

Speeds were monitored by ESCC and there is no doubt that there are a significant number of drivers who ignore the limits. As a result, additional 30 signs have been painted on the road which we hope will be an additional deterrent. We hope to do further monitoring during 2013 to see if the new measures are working.

The A272 junction has had a proposal for increased no parking restrictions for over 8 years and we never seemed to reach the top of the list. Last year, with the help of Cllr Tony Reid and the support of East Sussex Highways, we pushed our way to the top. The necessary public consultation was carried out and the new double yellow lines have been painted. Whilst the actual painting took place after the year end all the work involved happened over the last 12 months. We believe that the efforts we make via the SLR arrangements to meet ESCC Highways on a regular basis, together with the questionnaire that we issued to villagers and school users, have significantly helped to bring this project to fruition.

## Bus Services

We now have two buses per day running directly between Hadlow Down and Uckfield (the bus no longer goes via every conceivable village in East Sussex) and it runs from Dog Kennel Lane to the Uckfield Bus station in 20 minutes and then continues to Uckfield Hospital/Bird-in-eye Surgery. We really would like to encourage villagers to use these bus services as if they are not used by enough people they will stop and it will mean that Hadlow Down is again isolated from Public Transport.

## Playing Field

This has been a torrid 12 months for the Playing Field Committee. The weather for most of the year was very poor and the field frequently too wet to use. The poor weather early on meant that the field could not be mown and special equipment was then needed to cope with the long grass. The Summer Fayre was cancelled after an initial postponement and the junior football have ceased to use the field because of the extremely wet surface. These cancellations reduced dramatically the income at a time of vastly increased cost. The Parish Council will have to help with the cost of mowing and have budgeted for the need to help in this year. Add to this the fact that the Committee were short of people as the Chair resigned due to work commitments and you can see the task facing the trustees who are all volunteers. We had also hoped to carry out a ground survey for the new Community Centre which would also have given us the information needed to decide what additional drainage could be put in on the field – unfortunately the underlying ground conditions are still so bad that the equipment necessary cannot get on to the Field. The good news is that despite the weather families are still coming to use the play area which, for some strange reason, does not suffer from the wetness that the rest of the Field experiences. The first cricket matches have been played which is a vast improvement on last year.

## Village Hall

Whilst it remains our fervent hope that we will be successful in building a new Community Centre, meanwhile we must keep the existing Hall in good condition- and even improve it to increase the usage.

The Village Hall Committee has been able to carry out many of the improvements planned. Grant Funding and donations from a number of people and organisations enabled them to put in the new kitchen which has used equipment that can be re-sited at the new Community Centre. Most of the work, except the specialist work needed to plumb in a new gas supply, was done by volunteers and we are very grateful to them. In addition to the kitchen there has been further woodworm treatment in the roof and under the floor and various other small improvements including upgrading some of the electrics which did not meet *current* standards.

You may also have noticed the clearance of the south side of the road outside and we can now see a kerb there! Despite everything the Hall continues to be well used which highlights how much more we could do with an up to date Hall with modern facilities. Let us hope that we will be successful soon.

We must mention the TN22 Club. The new kitchen meant that the facilities existed to provide a lunch and a get-together for the older people locally and the first lunch was very successful, with over 20 guests. Apart from lunch, the guests were entertained by children from St Mark's and the feedback has been very positive with more people expected at future events.

## Hut Lane

One of the problems facing the Village Hall was that the drainage pipe in Hut Lane had collapsed. This pipe takes surface water from part of the A272, from Standen Mews and from the Lane itself and feeds it into the stream in the field at the bottom. The collapse meant that the Village Hall was constantly surrounded by water and the edges of Hut Lane were being eroded very badly. Following the collapse, the parties involved, ESCC, the developer etc all denied responsibility and as Hut Lane is an unadopted road nobody could be forced to take action. We felt it essential to take action and we did so. Although this was an expense we really did not want it is to the benefit of everyone using the Hall. We are pleased that we grasped the nettle and dealt with it.

## The Burial Ground

The burial ground owned by the Parish Council next to the Church had an uneventful year! The oak tree planted last year with the help of the children of St Mark's was looked after by them for the first 6 months and is now well established. We hope it will remain a place for the children to go and remember their part in its planting.

## **The next twelve months**

We promised a bus shelter and this will be in place in the next few months. Unfortunately, we had to go through the planning process for it but a Certificate of Existing Lawful Use or Development has been issued and the shelter has been ordered.

We are discussing a new lease with the School House Trust for the part of the Playing Field we do not own. We need to do this for the Community Centre. The Community Centre project has suffered setbacks but we are determined that it should proceed and will be backing the Committee all the way.

We are also continuing to look at ways of reducing the speed of traffic within the village and to make it safer for road users and pedestrians.

As for other things, what do you want? The Council exists to support Hadlow Down and we want to try and do those things which the majority of villagers would like. So, please tell us your views and we will listen to them. Contact any of the Councillors or the Parish Clerk.

## New Community Centre Committee

This project seems a classic case of two steps forward followed by one back! The Committee were well on track to get plans in this year when the 7km limit came in. The Committee and the Parish Council visited Wealden District Council's Planning department to see if there was a way that the venture could still proceed. They were reassured that the Council was very aware of the need for Hadlow Down – and indeed a number of other villages – to have new buildings to replace those now seriously out of date. We left the meeting feeling that there was a way forward.

The next stage was to conduct a survey of the Playing Field which would both establish the drainage needs of the Field and also the ground conditions on which a new Community Centre would stand. And then it rained and did not stop.

The Playing Field was already fairly wet following a wash-out summer but now things got worse. The machinery needed for the survey could not get onto the Field and even a plan to use boards to support the weight failed as it was too wet even for these.

Hopefully, the survey will take place in the next few weeks and we can then see the way forward more clearly. Our hopes of seeing plans by the end of June seem dashed.

On a positive note, the Council has been able to prove the ownership of the existing Hall land and this is in the process of final registration.

## Environment matters

The big issue to hit in 2012/13 was the 7km limit in the Wealden District Council Plan – now adopted. This heavily restricts building within 7km of the Ashdown Forest and potentially stops our new Community Centre. As we said earlier, we are supported by Cllr Roy Galley in our desire for a new Community Centre so we progress regardless.

## Youth

One of our concerns has always been that there are a large number of young people in the village but few facilities for them. The appointment of Nathan James to the Council has meant that we can have a focus on this area. A shelter is planned for the playing field near the Play Area as somewhere for young people to meet and chat out of the weather. It is due to be completed this year and we hope it will be as well used as the Play Area has been.

## Our expenditure

We explained last year that the Clerk was both essential and legally required and it is an exacting post. For 2013/14 the Clerks hours will be reduced slightly as she has acquired greater knowledge in the role and she now also clerks for another Parish Council so there is some overlap in her work. We have, however, experienced a number of items of unexpected expenditure during 2012/13 such as the legal fees needed for the registration of the Village Hall land and the support for the Community Centre Committee. Some of this expenditure will actually be paid out in this financial year. In the budget and precept for 2013/2014 we have kept the same overall level of expenditure which means the precept is not increased for the year. This may mean that there will be things that we cannot afford to deal with but this is inevitable in the current financial climate. The following figures are those set out in the end of year financial statement included in the minutes of the Annual Meeting.

### Expenditure

|                                      |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Staff costs                          | 9,708         |
| General admin                        | 2,939         |
| Subscriptions                        | 418           |
| Grants                               | 1,625         |
| Burial ground                        | 2,331         |
| Playing Field                        | 0             |
| Litter/dog bins                      | 1,038         |
| Fingerposts/notice boards            | 340           |
| Councillor's expenses and allowances | 284           |
| Election expenses                    | 500           |
| Play area                            | 628           |
| Councillor's training                | 408           |
| Legal fees                           | 1,310         |
| Projects                             | 1,226         |
| Parish magazine                      | 250           |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>23,005</b> |

