

Hellingly Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

Chairman's Report

At the beginning of the year the Parish Councillors were Pat Blake, Alan Booth, The Rev. Ronald Chatwin, Yvonne Chatwin, Barby Dashwood-Hall, Steven Davis, Bryan Hesselgrave, Gill Hesselgrave, Halma Hughes, Brian Payne, Elizabeth West, Frances Woolston and myself, with two vacancies. One of the vacancies was quickly filled with the co-option of Frankie Lulham but the other remains vacant. Any person interested in joining the Council should contact the Clerk.

The work of the Council is shared between various subcommittees:-

- the Allotments, for which there is strong demand and which provide a useful village amenity.
- the Cemetery where during this year the area set aside for cremated remains has been improved and more clearly defined;
- the Village Hall which forms a valuable base for the play group and many clubs and societies serving local residents;
- the Sports and Recreation Grounds provide play areas for younger children and opportunities for organised sports for adults and young people;
- and the Planning Committee which comments on planning matters within the Parish.

In this last year new play equipment and safety fencing have been added to the children's play area on the recreation ground at Lower Horsebridge. A slide will shortly complete the refurbishment about which I spoke in last year's annual report. Once again the Council is indebted to our Clerk for successfully obtaining a further grant (in this case from the Big Lottery Fund) towards the cost and in so doing saving the Parish a sum of some £5500.

The Council also replaced the bus shelter along the A22, paid for a new naming street sign at Carters Corner and installed, in North Street, a direction sign indicating the location of the cemetery.

In addition to commenting on the many applications affecting individual properties in the Parish the Planning and Environment Committee made comments on the Wealden Local Development Framework and on the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Waste Strategy. The Committee also raised with Wealden District Council concerns of residents at proposals for music festivals at Broad Farm and Blackstock Farm. It remains the view of the Council that such events that cause considerable disturbance and inconvenience to local residents should only take place in the countryside on authorised and regulated sites and that otherwise event organisers should be asked to justify why an event should take place on a particular site.

The current economic recession has both delayed the start of much of the development in the Parish for which planning consents have been granted and caused the closure of several local businesses (including Shep Plastics) with a resultant loss of employment. However in November of last year a start was made on the development of the former Hellingly Hospital site, now called Roebuck Park. In due course this development will deliver a new community hall, a sports pitch and pavilion, several new children's and young adult play spaces, a community park, new high frequency bus services to Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne, and 120 new affordable homes the majority of which will be for rental.

As part of the hospital development the developer is committed to various road and junction improvements including traffic calming measures along Station Road to discourage “rat running” through the village. For the present however despite a clearly agreed traffic plan, construction traffic has been using Church Road, Station Road and Mill Lane. The Council has asked for long-term “No construction traffic” signs to be provided which it is hoped will prevent future disturbance and potential damage to properties.

Additionally it now seems very likely that New Road Nurseries, which were threatened with closure last year will be taken over by a charitable company from Brighton and will both continue to serve the area with quality plants and provide useful employment and therapy for those employed there.

As part of the ongoing work on its Local Development Framework, Wealden District Council has published a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The document lists those areas of land suggested by developers, landowners and agents as suitable and available for development should planners decide that this is where additional development is required. At first sight the potential scale of possible development is of concern, with proposals affecting most of the land between North Hailsham and the former hospital site. Development on this level would greatly exceed even that required in the South East Plan and is most certainly not required. However until the adoption of the Wealden LDF which is not now likely to be before late 2011 at the earliest there will continue to be uncertainty for residents and your council.

Wealden Council now proposes to publish its draft Core Strategy for a six week period of public representations by November 2010 with a view to submitting this to the Secretary of State in January 2011 and an examination in public in May 2011. On this timetable the Strategy would be adopted in November 2011. Wealden Council also intends publishing a Strategic Sites plan and a Housing and Business Land Allocation plan (which will be the documents that identify the locations of future development as opposed to the broad strategy of the Core Strategy) in early 2011 for public comment and it will be then that residents will have a further opportunity to comment upon the level and location of further development if any in the Parish.

In this brief overview of Parish activities and plans, I have undoubtedly omitted to refer to a wide variety of matters that will have affected some, or all of you, in various ways. All of the work of the Parish Council continues to be recorded in our Minutes, which are available for inspection by parishioners at any time in office hours or by accessing the Council's Website www.hellingly-pc.org.uk. In addition, the Council meets regularly on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Hall and all are welcome to attend.

Finally, as on previous occasions, I will conclude my remarks by thanking once again all those who have served as Parish Councillors and by extending this Council's special thanks to my fellow District Councillor, John Blake, and our County Councillor, Nick Bennett who was elected in May last year, for all of their efforts on our behalf.

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D G White
Chairman