

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Hanley Castle Parish Council meets on the third Thursday of January, March, May (AGM), July, September and November at Hanley Swan Village Hall: meetings start (usually) at 7:00 pm. However, please note that we are trialling monthly meetings until July. All members of the public are welcome at these meetings, though they will be allowed to address the council only before and after the meeting unless otherwise invited by the Chairman.

Our Council comprises: Telephone

Sue Roberts (Chairman)	592686
Sue Adeney	310440
Tony Atkinson	310408
Val Fare	311994
Francis Harcombe	310740
John Taverner	310460
Ian Thompson (Vice Chairman)	310716
Dennis Wade	310410

Associated officers:

Caroline Sutton (Clerk)	311665
Michael Andrews (Footpaths)	310352
David Cheale (Tree Warden)	310233
Graham Holmes (Playing Field Warden)	310098

The Parish Council Website

Our website presents far more information than can ever be printed in a newsletter. On it, you will find all the minutes of committee meetings, planning decisions, information regarding businesses resident in the parish, news, links to other sites, information about recycling facilities, access to our new forum and much, much more.

We are very keen to expand this site and to make it a valuable source of data for our residents. However, it is run by volunteers at no cost to the Parish and consequently would benefit from additional effort. If you would be prepared to lend a hand in providing content and timely updates, we would be glad to hear from you. Experience is not necessary (we'll help you with the technical stuff!), but a PC, an internet connection and boundless enthusiasm are all essential! We have plenty of ideas — we need help in getting them put onto the site. If you can help, please contact the editor: irt@cygnetlodge.co.uk or

Comments and contributions from parish residents are welcomed on any subject to do with our community. The Parish Council is very conscious of the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter and the methods of so doing will be under constant review.

If you would be prepared to receive it in electronic form either by email or by downloading it from our website, please let us know — this will help us to keep production costs to a minimum.

The information contained in this newsletter is edited by Ian Thompson
Telephone: 01684 310716, email irt@cygnetlodge.co.uk or by post to
Cygnet Lodge, Worcester Rd., Hanley Swan, Worcs. WR8 0EA.

Hanley Castle Parish Council - July 2009

JULY 2009 NEWSLETTER

AN UPDATE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF
HANLEY CASTLE AND HANLEY SWAN

Chairman's Annual Report

During the past year the Parish Council has:

- Amended its timetable of meetings, initially on a trial basis, to meet monthly on the third Thursday each month, 7.00pm at Hanley Swan Village Hall. This will hopefully result in shorter meetings and a speedier response to items and will be reviewed in July
- Benefited from the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of Councillors, the Clerk and its volunteer Wardens and helpers.
- Continued the consideration of Affordable Housing for the Parish:
 - Distributed new housing need survey forms to every household in the Parish during July 2008.
 - Engaged with other Parish Councils on the subject initially through the posting of relevant information on the website.
 - Found worrying examples of schemes which did not appear to provide for the local need.
 - Given Public Question Time over to the issue before the start of several meetings and received helpful feedback from local residents
 - Held Community First to account for the failings of the previous survey and the associated housing scheme.
 - Insisted on being allowed to audit the data collected during the July 2008 survey.
 - Justified its continuing emphasis on the subject by repeating its desire to ensure that any proposed scheme delivers on the promise to provide local affordable housing for local people.
- Kept up with work on the Pond, repairing the willow, searching for the outlet pipe, trying to re-establish the water-lilies and planning further for gabions on the West side
- Liaised with the Highways Dept. regarding repairs to their drainage headwall and pipe work.
- Met with the Planning Dept. of MHDC to better understand their decisions on applications and their relationship with Parish Councils.
- Noted the concerns of local residents regarding the variances between the built houses and the approved plans at Jubilee Cottage and met with the Planners to try and resolve the problems.
- Offered comments on all applications, made site visits, sent representatives to meetings of MHDC Planning Committee and attended the Public Exhibition on the plans for the former incinerator site.
- Piloted the use of electronic versions of plans when considering applications and fed back comments to MHDC.

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WWW.HC-PC.ORG.UK

(Continued from front page)

- Questioned MHDC repeatedly about their handling of planning enforcement issues.
- Re-fenced the Play Area following the installation of the new equipment and the laying of the new bark pit and welcomed Graham Holmes to the new post of Playing Field Warden.
- Sent representatives to various meetings including affordable housing, Choice Based Letting, CALC, Crothorne Parish Council (re: affordable housing) and flooding.
- Taken steps to ensure that the various agencies responsible for floods and drainage fulfilled their responsibilities particularly in areas of concern such as Gilberts End.
- Upped the pressure on the relevant authorities to provide some form of traffic calming/speed reduction in the villages.
- Valued the continuing work of the Parish Lengthsman and looked forward to him being able to enhance his role with the use of the vehicle activated speed reader.
- Welcomed a variety of visitors to its meetings including the Police (PC Alan Naulls and his CSO's, Lucy Rowbotham and Sally MacPherson), representatives of the Three Counties Agricultural Society (Nick Vincent and John Wilesmith) and heard about the Smartwater scheme from Paul Leopold.
- Examined the Parish Plan, published five years ago, and reviewed the progress made against the targets set at the time.
- Yielded to the inevitable fate of Hanley Castle Post Office, which was closed despite the local campaign to keep it open.
- Zipped round the Parish collecting litter for the annual Parish Litter Collection Day.
- In 2009/2010 the intention will be to.
 - Apply for grant funding for work on the Pond,
 - Try to recruit a Pond Warden,
 - Register the Pond as a Village Green,
 - Officially 'open' the newly improved Play Area,
 - Improve the rest of the Playing Field possibly with a new BMX track,
 - Continue to press for traffic calming/speed reduction measures,
 - Keep up the pressure to ensure any proposed Affordable Housing scheme meets the needs of local people.

Sue Roberts, Chairman.

A word or two on expenses....

With the recent row over MP's expenses still ringing in our ears, we thought it would be worth mentioning a few things:

- Our 8 Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers.
- The Chairman receives an annual allowance of £75.00, other members have no allowances.
- In the year to May 2009, expenses claimed by all councillors were ZERO despite incurring costs in attending meetings and training courses, etc..
- The clerk is the only officer who receives a salary — £3,500 in the year to May 2009
- Our precept (i.e. the share of Council Tax the PC receives to fund its operations) for the current year has not been increased over the amount received in 2008/9

FINANCIAL REPORT 2008/2009

A copy of the receipts and payments for the year ended 31st March 2009 shows receipts of £30,946.31 which included a b/f balance of £12,401.41 and payments of £28544.67.

We are grateful to the County Council for providing £2060.00 funding for the Lengthsman scheme plus an extra £150 for monitoring speed with the use of a VAS reader, where the budget has been carried forward into the new financial year.

The precept raised was £15000.00, an increase of £3000.00 over the previous year.

Expenditure was as the list below

Staff Costs		3502.20
Ex gratia payment		2000.00
Other administrative costs		107.81
Members allowances & expenses		75.00
Insurance		570.80
Section 142 Payment		200.00
Subscriptions - CALC etc.		494.17
Grass cutting		3546.00
Paths maintenance	contra	25.00
Playing Field rent		200.00
Play Area & Playing Field		12,725.76
Audit Fee		285.00
Training Courses		204.03
Demon Internet & Website		65.00
V.A.T. paid		2871.18
Worcs.CC-Lengthsman	contra	1308.00
Parish Plan (Newsletter printing)		35.71
Pond		79.01
Pestkill Annual Contract		250.00
Total		28544.67

The Accounts and Audit regulations 2003 require that the Accounts are subject to an internal audit report covering the financial regulations, budget monitoring etc. and we are very grateful to Chris Price for acting as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor

Caroline Sutton, Clerk to the Parish Council.

6th May 2009

During the year unfortunately it has not been possible to carry out further works on the restoration of this feature due to high water levels.

Thanks to the local knowledge of several residents and to the considerable assistance of the Highways Department of the Worcestershire County Council the outfall drain has recently been located and cleared. The water level has receded significantly although further work is to be carried out by the County Council to install a sump which will enable water levels to be maintained and controlled in future. At the same time the County Council will replace the collapsed drain opposite the Post Office.

In the near future the willow weave will be trimmed and damage to the banks behind repaired. It is proposed to install gabions on the western side of the pond and to back-fill with hardcore and soil to restore the banks. The Countryside Service of the County Council has offered assistance with this work but there is an immediate need for materials to fill the gabions and for backfilling before work can commence. (Does anyone know of a source?)

The Parish Council is continuing with its efforts to register the pond as a village green but this is proving to be a lengthy process. It is intended to make an application for a Community Spaces Grant to assist with the finance for the project.

John Taverner

The Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee of Trustees currently consists of twelve members, nine from regular hall users and three village representatives. There are vacancies for three more village representatives.

The Village Hall has been a very active venue in the past year and we now have twenty five regular weekly or monthly sessions booked, utilising an average of 58 hours per week. In addition we have numerous parties, weddings and other 'one off' functions. Our total lettings were £10688, but after three years with no overall change we have increased our overall charges by 4.5%. This will give us scope to continue with our hall improvement schemes. Fund Raising events included film shows, plus our long term sales of tea towels, notelets and crossword books, all of which have produced worthwhile income.

Modernisation has continued to move forward. We have constructed a mezzanine floor storage area behind the stage and helped with material to enable the pre-school playgroup to build storage racking to better contain their equipment. We have also widened the right hand door at the side of the stage to allow better access to the disabled persons toilet. Guttering has been replaced and the barge boards etc. repainted. 14 tonnes of gravel has been laid in the car park and the fence close to the southern boundary has been renewed. We also now have a Caretaker/Maintenance Handyman who will undertake small repair work as well as floor polishing, cleaning etc.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to the Committee for their support and help during my year as Chairman.

Tony Atkinson

The Children's Play Area

Following the refurbishment of the play area last year, the additional bark was acquired in the summer of last year and the erection of new fencing was organized by Cllr. Tony Atkinson soon after that. The final result is most pleasing and - in view of the sturdier construction of the new equipment - should last for many years to come.

The Council is delighted that it has managed to recruit local resident Graham Holmes as volunteer playing field Warden - we are sure that the related activities will keep Graham busy in his retirement. Grateful thanks are offered to Graham for his generosity.

Ian Thompson

The Footpath Warden speaks..

Though we are still living off the hard work put in by Marjorie and Michael Nelson, we have had one or two successes this year. Most Mondays you will find us (I have two unpaid assistants whose wristwork with a pair of secateurs has to be seen to be believed) tramping the byways of our beloved village. The bridge by Tickeridge Farm has now been renewed and a number of stiles have been repaired and/or strengthened.

Certain field gates have been enlarged and consequently some of the small plastic waymark signs are no longer visible. We have replaced some. However if you come across a path with no obvious sign, please let me know and I will put it on my "roundtuit" list. Similarly any other defects that you think need attending to - pass on the good word!

Mike Andrews

The Annual Parish Meeting

We have two annual meetings: The Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. Confused? You're not alone! The first-mentioned meeting IS NOT a Parish Council meeting - it's designed to inform the public about what has been done in the year and to give everyone a chance to have a say about any Parish matter that interests or concerns them. The second meeting IS a Parish Council meeting - effectively the AGM of the Council at which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are nominated and elected, and the various committees, sub-committees and working parties are re-populated.

In the past, we have always run the two meetings end-to-end on the same evening, which has no doubt contributed to the confusion. Also, this form of meeting has come across as a bit 'dry'. So, this year, for the first time in the history of the Council, we ran the Annual Parish Meeting on its own on a day prior to the Annual Meeting of the PC. We invited local societies and clubs to attend so as to 'display their wares' following which a public 'question and answers' session was held. There was an excellent turnout of both exhibitors and interested residents and the feedback we have received means that we will no doubt host a similar event again next year.

The new Housing Needs Survey, which was conducted during June last year, had its results audited by two members of our Council. This was to ensure that the errors in the last survey report (produced by the Rural Housing Enabler) were not repeated. Following our audit, the Parish Council has agreed the veracity of the entry of the results into the data system used to produce the new report.

The conclusions presented in the new report prepared by Nigel Potter, Rural Housing Enabler, were debated at our April meeting. The report is available to the public on our web site: www.hc-pc.org.uk/affordablehousing.htm. Having digested its contents, we raised a number of points which required expansion, explanation or verification and these were presented to MHDC's housing department for comment. Their response was reported at the PC meeting of 21st. May and was judged to be positive in respect of our desire to ensure that homes built are for local people, first and foremost. Therefore, it was decided unanimously that the Parish Council remains in support of an affordable housing scheme in our Parish on the basis of (a) genuine, demonstrated need and (b) accessibility to local people.

Since the aforementioned meeting, two planning applications have been received with the intent of satisfying the need for affordable housing: one of these being a revised application for 11 dwellings (previously 14) on the site on Welland Rd., between Westmere the School; the other is for 13 dwellings on a site at the south corner of Picken End where it meets the main road. Only one of these applications will be successful, as both are designed to accommodate the *whole* need as defined by the report of the Rural Housing Enabler. For more and up-to-date news on this subject, please visit our web site, link as above.

It is important that all residents who wish to present a view on this subject make their voice heard in various places over the coming months: at Parish Council meetings ('public question time'); to the MHDC planning officers and to MHDC's housing department.

Ian Thompson



The ducks fighting back the ice — February 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP REPORT JULY 2009

Speeding

This was the biggest concern raised in Parish Plan of 2005.

The group drew up a list of potential options and these were discussed with Highways and Police including speed activated warning devices, speed cameras, speed bumps/ rumble strips, road narrowing (gating) and a mobile speed indicator.

From discussions it was clear that Highways and the Police could not support the majority of options considered however, the Parish is taking part in a trial involving a mobile speed indicator. The group are also considering, as a trial, gating at one of the entrances to Hanley Swan. The Café and Local Market have kindly offered funds to assist with suitable speed reduction projects. A public feedback session was held at the Café & Local Market on 27th September, the Police and Highways attended that meeting and were able to judge the strength of local feeling regarding this issue.

Safer Road Partnership

Following the feedback session and lobbying by the Parish Council and residents, the Police requested that the "Safer Roads Partnership" carry out speed monitoring in Hanley Swan. The results were presented at our May meeting; the results showed that 61% of traffic through the village exceeded the speed limit with the average speed (85 percentile figure) being 37 mph. The results would allow the "Safer Roads Partnership" to carry out speed enforcement in the village provided they are invited to do so by the Police and the County Council, who would also need to supply suitable off road parking for their vans or sites for fixed cameras. Your Parish Council is committed to doing all it can to ensure action is taken and is currently lobbying all the concerned parties and would actively encourage local residents to contact County Councillors to reinforce the message.

Blackmore Park Caravan Club

Councillor Val Fare and I met with the local manager of the site and we were given a guided tour. It is clear that they are taking steps to provide some natural habitat for wildlife. However our concern is the 70-plus lights around the site that switch on automatically as natural light fades and remain on all night. The Parish Council has now written to the caravan club twice, suggesting ways lighting levels could be reduced and asking them to look at the alternatives, but as yet has received no response.

The Footpath at St Gabriel's Church

When it rained heavily recently, a deep puddle formed on the footpath just outside the car park entrance at St. Gabriel's Church. I am pleased to report that although it took some time, a new soak-away has now been dug and this section of the path resurfaced.

Dennis Wade