

Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2012

Around October time in 2009 a heads of terms agreement was struck with the Hoath Parochial Church Council for a lease of a small field on Ford Road. About a month later at a general meeting called by the parish council and the Herne and Broomfield Allotments Society was formed, indeed, they attended the 2010 Annual Parish Meeting and spoke of their enthusiasm and early plans for the site. At the first anniversary of these events there was concern being expressed at the slow rate of progress but every one soldiered on and the allotments society continued their regular meetings. At the second anniversary matters were becoming serious and there was some disruption within the association (there is nothing as sad as an allotments society without any allotments). We are now at the two and half year point and I am delighted to tell you that the lease for the small field on Ford Road has, at last, been signed and the allotments society has healed the internal problems so the society and the PC can now get on with the business of developing the site.

The annual events, the garden safari and the fun day, were both successful again this year. The safari saw 17 gardens open and raised £1,997.06 which was shared between The Kent Air Ambulance (£1,000.00) and parish community projects. The fun day saw slightly higher crowds than the previous year and an amazing £3,168.14 was raised and this was shared between community projects and the Strode Park Foundation (£1,585.00). We also held a quiz night which raised £507.49 and our thanks go to Cllr John Nicholson and his family for organising the evening. John also provided hot food, including a delicious curry for the cheque presentation events.

The children's Christmas party was held in the Herne Institute Hall where 63 local children tucked in to cakes and ice cream were entertained by Pip the Clown and had a quiet word with Father Christmas. In staging these events the council has been, yet again, indebted to a large number of local volunteers without whom the events just would not happen.

Our three standing committees have all had a busy year. The Planning and Highways committee under the chairmanship of Cllr. Ann Blatherwick meets most often, about every three weeks, continuing to oppose any building proposals which would be likely to adversely affect the Parish.

The Environment and Leisure committee chaired by Cllr. Jennifer Taylor meets as required which is usually more than four times a year. It has been the guiding force behind the allotments provision and the workhorse for all the events undertaken by the council.

The Finance and Resources committee is chaired by Cllr. Robert Jones and meets quarterly. It keeps the council on a straight financial course. It also looks after staffing matters.

Now the subject of Monica, it must be said that our Parish continues to be blessed with such a hard working and enthusiastic clerk. It is hard to imagine how many of the events which the council is involved in each year could be possible without her untiring efforts. This is on top of running a very efficient parish office with all the attendant administrative management that a large parish requires.

Parish council surgeries which are held monthly on the First Saturday at Herne Mill from 10.00 to 12.00 have continued throughout the year though they are not well attended. We could assume everyone is happy with the way the council is working.

I must mention the thriving local clubs and organisations within the parish, some of which are represented here. These associations are a very important part of parish life and all of the organisers deserve tremendous credit for the work they do.

The PC are now the proud owners of the Hall, formerly called St Pauls Hall, and the surrounding land at the rear of the school land car park. A public consultation is underway to help the council decide whether to refurbish or extend the existing building or to build a new community centre. A new committee has been formed under the chairman, Cllr Carol Davis, to take this project forward.

In the meantime the old Upper Red Lion pub became the focus of parishioners' attention when Tesco showed an interest in developing the site for a new Tesco Express store.

The PC called a public meeting in our new community hall but the venue was overwhelmed by the number of people who turned up and, luckily, Elaine Richardson was on hand to offer the church as an alternative venue. At this meeting many voiced the feeling of all who attended which was against the Tesco proposal. A suggestion from the floor of that meeting was taken up and a separate committee, the Herne Against Tesco committee (HAT) was formed to organise the protest and develop, along with the PC, a strategy to fight any planning proposals Tesco might produce.

In the face of the huge display of opposition Tesco eventually withdrew their interest in the site. The HAT committee is still extant although the acronym now stands for Herne After Tesco, and they are concentrating on the future use of the URL

All council members have contributed to another successful council year and I give them all my thanks for having made my third year in the chair a smooth and very enjoyable experience.

Cllr Tony Day
30 March 2012