



MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012



Harvel Village Hall – 100 years old



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MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCILLORS

In May 2011 elections took place at the Annual General Meeting for the offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Honorary Treasurer of Council. Members of the three Standing Committees (Administration & Resources; Environment & Amenities; Planning & Projects) were also appointed.

NURSTED AND HOOK GREEN WARD



Cllr Alison Aitken



Cllr Mark Everson
(Hon. Treasurer)



Cllr Ken Kemsley



Cllr Jo McTavish

CAMER AND MEOPHAM GREEN WARD



Cllr Sheila Buchanan



Cllr Peter Hasler

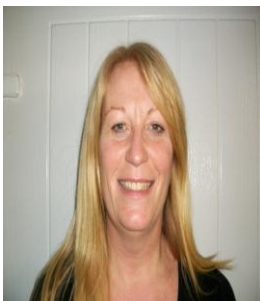


Cllr Douglas Powell
(Chairman of
Council)



Cllr Barbara
Wade (Vice-
Chairman of
Council)

CULVERSTONE AND HARVEL WARD



Cllr Gill Bateman
(co-opted August
2011 and resigned
March 2012)



Cllr Max
Bramer



Cllr Ceri Courtney

NO PHOTO
AVAILABLE

Cllr Hugh Marshall

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REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL CLLR DOUGLAS POWELL

Following elections which took place in May 2011, six new Councillors joined the Council, leaving one vacancy. The co-option of Cllr Gillian Bateman to the ward of Culverstone and Harvel took place in August 2011 to provide a full complement of 12 councillors. Regrettably, Cllr Bateman subsequently felt that she was not able to meet the necessary commitments and stood down with effect from 20 March 2012.

One of the major issues that the Parish Council dealt with this year was a consultation by Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) regarding proposed changes related to local planning - The Local Development Framework (LDF). We held a well-attended public meeting in November 2011 to hear the views of parishioners and the feedback was an overwhelming rejection of the plans presented by GBC. We would like to thank all those residents who attended the public meeting and provided us with written comments to express their views. More detail about the LDF can be found on page 10.

The A227 was closed once more for four days in June 2011, again due to a burst water main. When the repair to the road was carried out it was unsatisfactory and the contractors returned to remedy this. Southern Water advised that their leak reduction programme had led to fewer burst mains across their network. The Parish Council requested that Southern Water consider commissioning a study into whether the damage to pipes on the Wrotham Road had been exacerbated by vibration from heavy vehicles. We will continue to monitor this issue.

The Royal British Legion celebrated its 90th anniversary in November 2011. This occasion was commemorated and well attended, as in previous years, with a service at the War Memorial on Meopham Green led by Canon Gordon Oliver.

Meopham has been well served for the last five years by our local Police Officer, PC Helen Lamb. PC Lamb left Kent Police in December 2011 and I would like to welcome PC Dave Smith to the parish as her replacement. He is supported by PCSO Jo Hartley and until March 2012 PCSO Dave Brooker. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking PC Lamb and PCSO Brooker on behalf of the community for their dedication to the parishioners of Meopham. The team, assisted by Community Wardens Jacqueline Fuller and Mandy Cason maintain a watchful eye on the parish.

We are always very grateful for the work of all our Borough Councillors, Cllr Michael Snelling, Cllr Derek Shelbrooke and Cllr Mrs Lesley Boycott who attend our meetings, whenever possible. Miss Laura Hryniewicz resigned as Borough Councillor for Meopham North in May 2011 and Cllr John Cubitt was elected as her replacement. Cllr Cubitt is also a County Councillor for Gravesham East and Cllr Snelling is a County Councillor for Gravesham Rural.

I am grateful to my fellow councillors for all the hard work they have done during the past year and for the support they have given me, and especially to my Vice Chairman, Cllr Barbara Wade and to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of our Standing Committees for their contributions during the year. Meopham is also very fortunate to have two people who support all the Councillors. They are Bryan Rayner, the Clerk, assisted very ably by his Deputy Clerk, Sarah Steven.

Finally, it has been an honour and privilege to chair this Council over the last year and I am looking forward to working with my fellow councillors on the challenges to be faced in the future.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (A&R) CLLR MAX BRAMER

Responsibilities of the A&R Committee: Internal Procedures including Standing Orders, Risk Management, Emergency Plan, Quality Parish Status, Oversight of Accounts and Audit Arrangements, Overview of Standing Committee Budgets and Expenditure, Contracts, Best Value and Review of Administration Costs, Personnel Matters, Publicity and Media Relations, Parish Website.

Committee Members: Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr Mark Everson, Cllr Peter Hasler, Cllr Hugh Marshall, Cllr Douglas Powell and Cllr Barbara Wade.

The Committee met five times during the course of this Council year under the Chairmanship of Cllr Max Bramer and Vice-Chairman Cllr Peter Hasler.

Accounts and Financial Matters

The Committee oversees the budgets and ongoing expenditure of all three Standing Committees on behalf of Full Council. It is also responsible for ensuring that the Annual Audit is completed through an internal audit process, in order to satisfy the District Auditor that the public finances are accountable to public scrutiny. As this report is being published before the end of the financial year on 31 March 2012, it is not possible to issue a summary of the accounts for the financial year 2011/2012. We consider, however, that the overall financial position is satisfactory

The Contracts and Audit Sub-Committee keeps a watching brief on all the Council's contractual commitments, which are mainly for administrative support services. The sub-committee make recommendations to Full Council and other Committees, when considered appropriate.

Training

With six new Councillors joining the Parish Council, one of the key items of expenditure over the last year was providing induction and other training. The Clerk also attended a number of training sessions as he continued working towards gaining the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification.

Risk and Asset Management

The Committee reviews risk management regularly, including the need for full insurance against all appropriate eventualities and public and employer liability. The Committee also keeps the Parish Risk and Asset Registers under regular review.

Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

Meetings of the Council are conducted under strict protocols to ensure that members conform to a recognised code of practice and that any interests are declared. The adopted Code of Conduct for Councillors is in line with national policy.

Emergency Plan

The Parish Council's Emergency Plan is reviewed regularly to ensure it is up-to-date. The second closure of the A227 in June 2011 emphasised the importance of the Emergency Plan and we are reviewing it in the light of this further experience.

Personnel Issues and Staffing Matters

The Parish Council has responsibility for the staff in the Parish Office. Formal contracts of employment are in place and there are annual appraisals as part of the salary review. Our Clerk, Bryan Rayner, and Deputy Clerk, Sarah Steven, continue to provide excellent support to the work of the Parish Council.

Information given to the public

Monthly reports on the work of the Parish Council are placed in the Meopham Review and on the noticeboards within the parish, together with reports in other press and media from time to time.

The "Meopham Mercury" newsletter was published in August 2011 and January 2012. The August issue was circulated to households in the Hook Green and Camer areas. Copies of both were placed at key locations in the parish including the doctor's surgery, the library, the village halls, Harvel Farm Shop, the Costcutter store at Culverstone and the chemist at Neville Parade. Copies are also sent by e-mail to those Parishioners who have so requested. All publications produced by the Parish Council can also be found on our website.

The Parish Website (www.meopham.org)

The website continues to be very popular. There are sections including local history, landmarks, local information, local services and amenities, education, groups and societies. There are also sections on 'Residents of Renown' and 'Meopham Chronology'. There is a facility for parishioners and organisations to advertise community events. The section on the Parish Council lists details of Councillors, Standing Committees, agendas and minutes (once approved), meeting dates, progress on all planning applications and a news and diary section, along with details of the Parish Council's precept and budget for the financial year.

During the second closure of the A227 in June 2011 the website was highly praised by both parishioners and travellers through the parish, as it was one of the main sources of up-to-date information on this incident.

Parishioners can also follow us on Twitter: @MeophamPC.

Grants in Aid

Small grants are made by the Council to groups and organisations within the Parish who are in need of support, particularly with meeting some of the costs for equipment that often can make a difference to the well-being of the community. The following grants have been made:

- Meopham Over 60s: £120 for Christmas Lunch
- Meopham & District Footpaths Group: £332 for path clearance equipment

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (E&A) CLLR BARBARA WADE

Responsibilities of the E&A Committee: Recreation and Sports Facilities and Clubs, Village Halls & Community Centres, Rights of Way, including Footpaths Groups, Recreation Grounds and Playground Equipment, Village Greens, Bye-Laws, Notice Boards, Harvel Pond, Maintenance & Upkeep, Environmental Improvement Schemes, Trees & Community Woodland, Allotments, Village Sign and Flagpole.

Committee Members: Cllr Alison Aitken, Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Ceri Courtney, Cllr Peter Hasler, Cllr Hugh Marshall, Cllr Douglas Powell and Cllr Barbara Wade.

The Committee met five times during the course of this Council year under the Chairmanship of Cllr Barbara Wade and Vice-Chairman Cllr Alison Aitken.

Judson's Recreation Ground

The Parish Council is responsible for Judson's Recreation Ground which was gifted to the Parish in 1950. In August 2009 the children's playground was completed and the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) was installed in April 2010 and both have proved extremely popular. Phase 3, to improve the Pavilion so that it provides better facilities, is now under consideration by the Parish Council. A planning application to refurbish and extend the pavilion was submitted to GBC in November 2011.

The Meopham Colts continue to use Judson's Recreation Ground for under-11 football matches and training. They do not use the Pavilion except for storage and emergency shelter.

Unfortunately, the birds nest swing in the play area was destroyed in an arson attack, which also damaged the safety surface beneath. The cost of repairs was in excess of £1,500. Two litter bins were also destroyed by fire in separate incidents and graffiti on the pavilion has continued to be a problem. The area is patrolled as frequently as possible by the Neighbourhood Team. If you have any information with regard to any of this vandalism, please contact Kent Police or Crimestoppers.

Culverstone Recreation Ground

The skateboard ramp at Culverstone had to be removed because it was considered to be in a dangerous condition. GBC and local youngsters held discussions on a replacement skateboard facility using a more suitable structure erected nearer to the Community Centre and play area. Provision of the replacement facility will be subject to funding from GBC.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

As part of the celebrations the Parish Council planted six native trees (one for each decade of the Queen's reign). The trees included a Copper Beech, Hornbeam, Rowan, Weeping Silver Birch, Whitebeam and an English Oak.

The Meopham Historical Society sponsored one of these trees (the English Oak) and it was planted on Hook Green in memory of Mr Jim Carley, who lived opposite the Green. The remaining five trees were planted at Judson's Recreation Ground. Four of them replaced trees which were in very poor condition and needed to be removed. It is hoped that these trees will be sponsored by organisations and residents of Meopham.

Grants

We have been pleased to assist local organisations including Churches, Meopham and Harvel Village Halls and Culverstone Community Centre with funding for repairs and improvements. More detailed reports by these organisations appear on pages 15 - 16.

- St Mildred's Church, Nurstead: £500 for roof repairs
- St John the Baptist Church, Meopham: £2,000 for Church Refurbishment and £500 for lighting repairs
- Meopham Village Hall: £1,800 for exterior redecoration
- Culverstone Community Centre: £900 for floor refurbishment
- Meopham Tennis Club: £1,800 for sports equipment and tree surgery

Rights of Way

We are grateful for the active support of Meopham and District Footpaths Group. The dedicated footpath wardens (Mr Ken Dare and Mrs Gillian Willsher) provide a highly valued service ensuring that work is carried out to make sure footpaths are kept in good condition. A more detailed report appears on page 17.

Allotments and Southdown Shaw

The Parish Council received a grant from the Gravesham Neighbourhood Forum to replace the fence between Southdown Shaw and the A227.

The allotments, which are run by a separate management committee, are still proving popular. A more detailed report appears on page 17.

Village Greens

Managing the various village greens is a major activity to ensure that trees and boundaries are properly maintained and benches are in good condition. Councillors carry out an annual survey of each green to identify any work which needs to be carried out, from tree pruning to post replacement. A major task which was instigated this year was a survey by a qualified Arboriculturalist on all the trees on parish-owned village greens, as well as Judson's Recreation Ground and Southdown Shaw, to enable a maintenance programme to be drawn up. This maintenance programme could have significant budgetary implications.

We continue to work with GBC Horticultural Services to ensure the maintenance of a high standard of grass cutting on the village greens throughout the parish. We are grateful to Meopham Cricket Club for the high standard of Meopham Green. Two new memorial benches were installed on Meopham Green and plans are being pursued for a further bench to be installed on Harvel Green.

An application for the grassed area in Mountfield Close in Culverstone to be registered as a village green was made by a resident and is under consideration by Kent County Council.

The Parish Council is very grateful for the work of Mr Colin Durham who ensures that the greens are free of litter and notifies the Parish Office of any issues of concern on the greens.

Parish Noticeboards

Following a grant gained from the Gravesham Rural Neighbourhood Forum, the six noticeboards in the parish were replaced. A new map of the rights of way in Meopham had been designed by Kent County Council and was installed on the new noticeboard at Meopham Green. The noticeboards are well used by the Parish Council and many other organisations advertising community events.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING & PROJECTS COMMITTEE (P&P) CLLR SHEILA BUCHANAN

Responsibilities of the P&P Committee: Kent County Council and Gravesham Borough Council Planning Policy, Community Festivities, Parish Projects, Shopping Parades, Parish Plan, Parish Guide, Police (Crime Reduction), Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, Library Services, Medical Services, Planning Applications, Procedures and Appeals, Housing Issues, Highways and Road Safety, Amenity/Street Lighting, Community Bus, Bus Shelters, Cleansing and Litter Collection.

Committee Members: Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Ceri Courtney, Cllr Ken Kemsley, Cllr Hugh Marshall, Cllr Jo McTavish, Cllr Douglas Powell and Cllr Barbara Wade.

The Committee met five times during the course of this Council year under the Chairmanship of Cllr Sheila Buchanan and Vice-Chairman Cllr Ceri Courtney.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

GBC launched an important consultation in October 2011 on rules relating to local planning. We held a well-attended public meeting in November 2011 to invite views from parishioners. Feedback was an overwhelming rejection of the plans that GBC had presented. A copy of our full response to GBC can be found on our website and is also available from the Parish Office.

In summary, we felt strongly that all brownfield sites had to be fully developed before a case was made for the erosion of our greenbelt. Failure to do so not only would deprive the area of large sections of its greenbelt, but also would represent a missed opportunity to regenerate brownfield sites.

A number of specific issues, not solely their current greenbelt status, made proposed developments in Meopham unsustainable. We noted that developing individual sites on such a large scale was unprecedented. The current level of infrastructure in Meopham was struggling to cope with the current population.

All proposed sites in the parish form part of the greenbelt and play a key role in protecting Meopham from urban sprawl. Building on these would be ribbon development. All sites are also good agricultural land which is a diminishing resource in the UK.

We believe that the LDF, when presented to the Secretary of State's Planning Inspectorate, should show that GBC puts economic growth and social well-being at the forefront of their planning by concentrating on regeneration and employment.

We believe that GBC has not sufficiently demonstrated the "exceptional circumstances" under which it would be permissible to declassify greenbelt land. The consultation process with residents of Meopham parish resulted in an overwhelming consensus that the current plans to build on greenbelt land should be completely opposed. On behalf of the residents of Meopham parish, MPC requested that GBC submit the figure of 4,600 dwellings, with a credible supporting plan, which grasps the opportunity to redevelop brownfield sites (including those in Meopham), while completely retaining the "green lung" for the benefit of all Gravesham residents.

GBC have revised their plans and now propose that their preferred strategic outcome be based upon 4,600 houses with no development of the Green Belt as currently defined. Provision of accommodation with the Green Belt will only be for those with identified needs and in accordance with an exceptions policy.

Kent County Council was a formal consultee on the LDF and in their response to GBC makes clear that it does not support the claimed need to build on any greenbelt land and questions some of the assumptions made. The full KCC Report can be found on their website (www.kent.gov.uk).

Highways and Transport

The Parish Council constantly monitors road safety in the Parish with particular reference to the A227. We liaise closely with GBC and Kent Highway Services (KHS). The countywide speed limit review was cancelled. However, should a major incident occur, that area would be investigated on an ad-hoc basis. We supported a proposal to lower speed limits on rural roads from 60 to 50 mph. Speed limit changes on the A227 outside of the parish were made and A227 traffic data is monitored.

The Committee also liaises regularly with KHS on issues that require attention such as potholes, uneven pavements and damaged road signs. The Culverstone Green sign, which went missing during 2011, was eventually replaced in early 2012.

KHS provided one-tonne salt bags in the car parks of St John's Church, Culverstone Community Centre and Harvel Village Hall over the winter period. New salt bins are no longer subject to the KHS assessment criteria. However, a KHS engineer will need to carry out site visits to ensure the bins do not become obstacles.

In conjunction with Kent Police, members of the Parish Council took part in several sessions using the Speed Indicating Device (SID). This equipment monitors the speed of vehicles and if speed is excessive, information may be passed to Kent Police for possible further action.

Bus Shelters

Unfortunately, two bus shelters outside the secondary school were vandalised with graffiti during the year. Four panes on two other shelters were smashed in separate incidents. These panes were replaced at a cost of over £525 to the Parish Council. Following receipt of a grant from the Kent Police Authority, we can offer a reward to anyone providing information resulting in the conviction or caution of anyone causing damage to bus shelters. If you have any relevant information, please contact Kent Police or Crimestoppers.

Affordable Housing

The application to build 50 sheltered homes with extra care facilities on the land north of Longfield Hill and west of Evenden Road was withdrawn by the applicant in September 2011.

We are conscious of the need for more affordable housing in Meopham to enable young people to remain in the community, and also for older people to downsize from larger properties. Our policy is to support building on brownfield sites in preference to intrusion into the greenbelt. Several sites have been identified and investigations are ongoing.

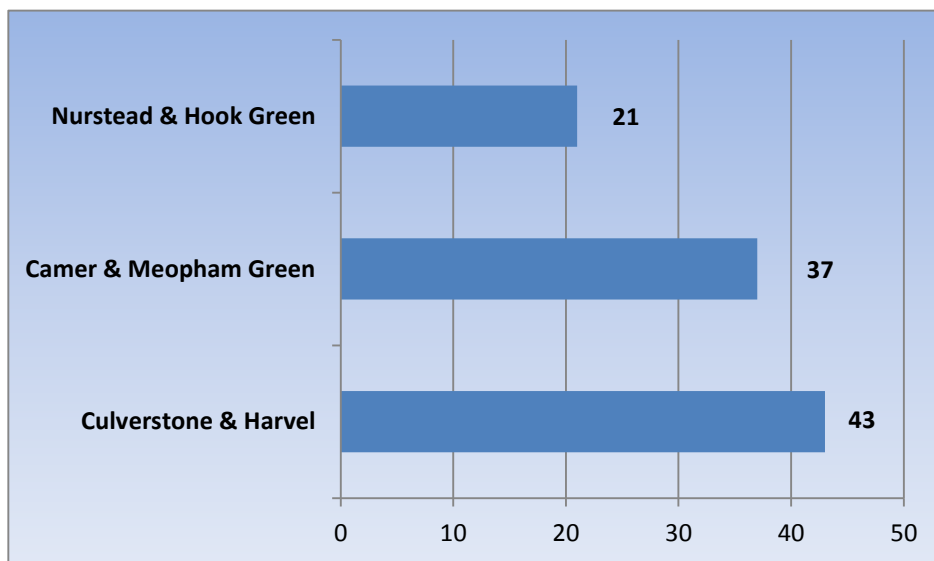
Rural Neighbourhood Forum

The forums, which are workshop style discussions with a question and answer session, have continued throughout the year. Topics which have been discussed include policing in rural Gravesham, the Lower Thames Crossing, environment, communities, housing, young Gravesham, business and regeneration.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Parish Council continues to scrutinise planning applications received from GBC. Each application is considered individually by a Councillor for the relevant Ward and a proposal is made to a Parish Council meeting for agreement to recommend approval or rejection of the application to GBC. Final decisions are then taken either by the GBC Regulatory Board or by Planning Officers under delegated powers.

The number of planning applications received by the Parish Council from May 2011 until February 2012 was 101. The number of applications is broken down by ward and type of application below.



Extensions	26
New Build/Replacement Buildings/Retention of buildings	21
Conservatory/Garage (including conversions)	14
Mobile Homes	2
Loft Conversion/Dormer Windows	1
Other*	37
TOTAL	101

*includes riding stables, change of use of premises on agricultural land and commercial units, schools, porches, floodlights, decking, solar panels, conversion of one dwelling into two, orangery, portacabins, shutters on shops, traveller sites, satellite dishes and telephone boosters.

The Parish Council recommended approval of 73 out of the 101 applications it considered. We are always vigilant to ensure that planning applications comply with greenbelt conditions and the Culverstone Valley Area policy whilst recognising residents' wishes to improve their properties for the benefit of their families and the community.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (Kent Rural Community Council)	Cllr Wade
Age Concern	Ms Ros Knott
Clay Cottages Trust	Cllr Hasler
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Cllr Powell
Culverstone Community Association	Cllr Bateman
Flagmaster	Cllr Kemsley
Gravesham Rights of Way Committee	Mr K Dare & Mrs G Willsher
Gravesham Joint Transportation Board	Cllrs Powell & Kemsley
Gravesham Standards Committee	Cllr Powell
Harvel Village Hall Management Committee	Cllrs Bramer & Marshall
Kent Association of Local Councils – Voting members at AGM and Gravesham Area Committee	Cllrs Hasler and Powell
Meopham Sports & Leisure Association	Cllrs Buchanan, Powell & Wade
Meopham Village Hall Management Committee	Cllr Wade
Meopham Welfare Committee	Mr C Durham
Meopham Windmill Trust	Mr I Kerr
NHS Darent Valley Hospital Briefings	Cllrs Hasler and McTavish

§ In some cases, the individuals listed are members of the Managing Body of the Organisations concerned. In others, they hold a watching brief on behalf of the Parish Council. Not all the Parish Representatives are members of Meopham Parish Council

VILLAGE HALLS & COMMUNITY CENTRE REPORTS

Culverstone Community Centre

The management and maintenance of Culverstone Community Centre has continued in much the same manner this year even though our committee members are thin on the ground. It would be nice to think that we could recruit some new members at our AGM, but in these present times with so many organisations needing volunteers this may not be possible.

Our major maintenance project for 2011/2012 was the refurbishment of the main hall floor. Unfortunately, this has proven to be less than satisfactory, and we may well have to have future refurbishment sooner rather than later. For 2012/13 we are planning to install a loop and PA system.

Regular activities at the Centre have continued much as before, with every evening during the week being taken up with short mat bowls, badminton, table tennis, and dog training. At present, we have a vacant slot for hire on Tuesday evenings from 8.30 onwards, which would be suitable for some sort of dance or exercise activity. There are also some daytime slots available.

New daytime activities are Zumba on Wednesday mornings and a weekly Coffee Morning on Mondays between 10am and 12pm.

Unfortunately, the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) left us at the end of December for financial reasons. However, two children's groups continue to use our facilities - Tumbletots, an activity club for preschool children, and Culverstone Community Theatre School. The children's theatre group meets on Saturday mornings, and, although it was only formed in October, managed to perform a pantomime for the community in December. Children's parties continue to be popular at weekends.

The skateboard ramp in the Recreation Ground had to be removed because it was rotten and considered to be in a dangerous condition. GBC and local youngsters would like to have it replaced with a more suitable structure, and meetings and fundraising will be taking place to enable this project to progress.

Culverstone recreation ground is to be used as a camping site for people wishing to visit the Olympic Games this year. Culverstone Community Association (CCA) has been working with GBC and the Caravan and Camping Club and will be allowing the Community Centre to be used as a Clubhouse for the site on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during this period i.e. from Friday 20th July to Thursday 16th August inclusive.

Looking forward to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the CCA is hoping to work together with the local PTA to organize a family tea party. More details can be found on the website - www.cca.btck.co.uk.

Harvel Village Hall

The annual Harvel Village Fete was held in June 2011 and continued to be the main fundraising event. Without doubt it has the support of the whole village and raised a record figure of nearly £3,000. With good weather there were many visitors to the village who enjoyed the varied stalls and attractions on offer, as well as a variety of food and liquid refreshments. It is always encouraging to hear the good feedback afterwards.

The Barn Dance is always a favourite event and was very well attended. Its huge success is, of course, in no small part thanks to the Jones family for hosting the event in a barn at Harvel House Farm.

The Christmas celebration was an informal event, where residents each provided a dish for the buffet table and were greeted on arrival with a glass of mulled wine. The local postman came for the evening and provided musical entertainment and guests were invited to take part in a team quiz.

2012 will be a very special year for the village hall, being the centenary of the opening of the original hall in 1912. All our events will have this as a focus, culminating in a village celebration in November. The Harvel Archive Project received a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund enabling the production of a book "Harvel 1912–2012" based on photos and memories of people connected with the village. The book will be available to villagers and for general sale to tie in with the centenary celebrations. Photos, documents and past and current residents' memories are being sought. There will also be an interactive website, not only chronicling the village's history, but allowing visitors to see the 'then & now' comparisons as well as being able to stay informed of events happening in and around Harvel.

Meopham Village Hall

The village hall is currently used by 18 contracted clubs, a slight reduction no doubt in part due to the current state of finances. Having said that we have carried on in fine fettle.

All the electrical work that required correcting has now been completed and now has new certification. The redecoration of the exterior of the hall is most impressive and our thanks again to the Parish Council who provided two thirds of the cost.

We have managed to fund a new state-of-the-art central heating system, changing from oil to gas. The system is zoned so that we do not have to have the whole system on and this led to a recent comment by the Gravesham Environmental Inspector that it is nice, but unusual, to come into a building with warm toilets in wintertime. He congratulated us on the state of the premises.

The 150+ Club continued to assist in funding our expenses.

The Management Committee now meet bi-monthly, instead of monthly, as we are up-to-date with our tasks.

FOOTPATHS WARDENS

It is our good fortune to have such an attractive and readily accessible network of Public Rights of Way in the parish of Meopham. The paths are used and enjoyed by those living in the parish and well beyond. There is the opportunity to use almost seventy rights of way which cover some thirty four miles.

Meopham Footpaths Group publishes a variety of walks from Meopham Green and other local starting points. In addition, the recently revised map on Meopham Village Green provides comprehensive information on the routes of the paths.

The two footpaths Wardens, Mr Ken Dare and Mrs Gillian Willsher, are co-opted onto the Environment and Amenities Committee of the Parish Council. They create an effective relationship with Meopham and District Footpaths Group, of which they are respectively Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and represent the Parish Council on the Gravesham Rights of Way Committee. In addition they liaise on a regular basis with the Kent County Council (KCC) Rights of Way Officer and others involved with public rights of way at KCC.

There has been further welcome progress by KCC with the co-operation of landowners in the replacement of stiles by kissing gates. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous people have stolen a number of the metal gates and this is disappointing.

We were pleased to arrange for the erection of a kissing gate (wooden – to deter metal thieves!) as a tribute to the late Mr Jim Carley. He was one of our valued Group founder members and was very active in promoting rights of way, as well as being a pillar of local society.

The Footpaths Group has been particularly industrious this year in keeping the paths free from obstructive vegetation. They have worked for over 150 hours on this task alone. In addition they have surveyed every path in the parish in order to identify and deal with any problems on our public rights of way.

The Group offers an extensive programme of walks throughout the year to its members covering the Parish and elsewhere. The membership now exceeds 300. This year it celebrates its 50th year and looks forward to a programme of celebration.

MEOPHAM AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Southdown Shaw allotments continued to be extremely popular and despite the fact that 28 plots changed ownership last year, we have entered 2012 with 9 names on the waiting list. It is great to "Grow Your Own" and if Gravesham residents are enthusiastic about the idea of working a plot to give them their small dose of the "The Good Life", we suggest they visit our website <http://meopham-allotments.weebly.com> to enquire further.

Meopham Parish Council advised in 2010 that the allotment lease required renewal and following numerous drafts and negotiations a revised lease was signed in March 2011. Unfortunately, it was discovered subsequently that the new lease was not legally acceptable and, following further legal advice, a revised lease was signed in February 2012. We are now able to apply for a grant which, if successful, will enable us to renew and improve the water pipeline on the site. We are hoping that this maintenance/upgrading work will be carried out as soon as possible this year to cause minimal disruption to plotters – our challenge for 2012.

MEOPHAM WELFARE COMMITTEE

The Committee is responsible for the running of the Meopham Community bus, sometimes known as the Parish Bus. The bus serves the needs of parishioners who live in the more remote parts of the parish such as Horns Oak Lane, Priestwood Green, and Dean Lane in Harvel. To these people our service is very much a lifeline.

The bus purchased in Spring 2010 has proved very satisfactory in service with a considerable saving on fuel costs. It is very popular with both our voluntary drivers - to whom we extend our gratitude for their time - and our passengers who find the seats very comfortable! During the year the bus carried 598 passengers on Tuesdays and 1077 on Fridays.

In addition the vehicle is available for hire to clubs and organisations within the parish of Meopham at advantageous rates. However, you do need to provide your own driver, preferably with a clean licence and some minibus driving experience.

For further details please contact either Mr Colin Durham on 01474 813451 or Mrs Hamilton on 01474 813209.

MEOPHAM COMMUNITY BUS TIMETABLE (Providing a service to the Community since 1979)

Meopham to Gravesend

Meopham Bartellas	09.38
Meopham Academy	09.40
Priestwood Green	09.45
Harvel White Horse	09.55
Harvel Village Hall	10.00
Meopham Academy	10.10
Longfield Hill Green Man	10.15
New Barn Road/Fawkham Avenue	10.17
Rosherville	10.28
Gravesend Overcliffe	10.30

Gravesend to Meopham

Gravesend St Georges Centre	12.30
New Barn Road/Fawkham Avenue	12.43
Longfield Hill Green Man	12.45
Meopham Academy	12.49
Priestwood Horns Oak Road	12.54
Harvel Pond	13.02
Harvel Village Hall	13.07
Meopham Academy	13.20
Meopham Bartellas	13.22

GRAVESHAM AND NORTHFLEET RURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

PC Dave Smith and PCSO Jo Hartley

Contact via 101 or gravesham.neighbourhood@kent.pnn.police.uk

This year has seen constant change affecting neighbourhood policing in Meopham. In November 2011 the New Kent Police Model was rolled out and a new Neighbourhood team created across the rural areas in North Kent, with three areas of North Kent, Medway and Swale being merged to form the new North Division. This new dedicated neighbourhood team now comprises a Detective Inspector, a Sergeant, a number of PCs and 4 PCSOs. The team cover Meopham, Culverstone, Vigo, Harvel, Sole Street, Cobham, Shorne and Higham.

Another important change that occurred during the year concerned how to contact Kent Police and specifically local neighbourhood officers. The team can be contacted by dialling 101 and requesting to speak to a team member or contact can be made via the Neighbourhood E-mail address as shown above.

Residents are now able to view crime statistics and calls relating to anti-social behaviour in Meopham via the Kent Police website. All that is required is a post code and the statistics are shown over a 12 month period. The figures show that, apart from a small increase in the summer months, crime and anti-social behaviour in Meopham is low. Judson's Recreation Ground is well used by families and youngsters and there have been a small number of incidents including criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. This area continues to be patrolled on a regular basis and we would request residents to report any anti-social behaviour via 101, or 999 if a crime is in the process of being committed.

Neighbourhood Panel meetings continued to be held in the Zion Baptist church on a regular basis and we would like to thank the church for the use of this excellent building. Surgeries are also held at Chinnery Court and other locations as required.

In conjunction with the Parish Council, we revisited the use of the Speed Indicating Device (SID). This entails using a portable kit to monitor road traffic speeds.

Meopham residents lost a long standing member of the Neighbourhood team in December 2011. PC Helen Lamb left to take up a new job and challenge outside Kent Police. PC Lamb had worked in Meopham for over five years. She was very sad to leave as she has enjoyed working in Meopham and has made many friends in that time. PC Lamb was replaced by PC Dave Smith. PC Smith has been with Kent Police for nine years and is very much looking forward to meeting residents and continuing the excellent work carried out by PC Lamb and her team.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDENS

Mandy Cason, 07977 981931 (Meopham South and Culverstone)
Jacqueline Fuller, 07813 713036 (Meopham, Sole Street and Cobham)

Kent County Council (KCC) Community Wardens provide a reassuring visible presence in 128 communities across Kent. They deal with low level crime and anti-social behaviour, working with partner agencies to make Kent a safer place to live. The wardens are committed to building community confidence and delivering high quality services. The wardens work flexible hours between 7.30 am and 10 pm daily, enabling them to address local problems as and when they occur within the parish.

The wardens' objectives are to:

- provide a reassuring conspicuous presence;
- promote community solidarity and encourage communities and neighbourhoods to identify and solve problems;
- tackle anti-social behaviour;
- act as "eyes and ears" for other agencies;
- be a trusted friend for the community;
- improve access to local authority services;
- provide information and advice about Kent County Council, local district councils and other public services;
- promote social inclusion.

They raise community awareness of problems such as bogus callers and scam letters preying on vulnerable people in their homes. They address environmental issues such as flytipping, graffiti, vandalism and dog fouling. They also report untaxed motor vehicles and aim to assist with parking issues within the parish. They engage with the young, elderly and vulnerable in activities such as sporting events, coffee mornings, breakfast clubs and advice surgeries.

Other issues dealt with by the wardens include:

- promoting neighbourhood watch;
- planning Jubilee events;
- talks on personal and road safety;
- neighbour disputes;
- nuisance/stray dogs;
- welfare advice and handy van referrals.

Projects which the wardens have been involved in organising and running include:

- Lego after school club in the library;
- Jumble sale/auction to raise funds for sensory equipment for the library;
- Rumbles Breakfast club at St John's Church.

The wardens were successful in gaining the following grants this year:

- Funding from Cllr Michael Snelling (KCC) for educational indoor/outdoor games for future events.
- Funding from the Gravesham Rural Neighbourhood Forum for the purchase of four lightweight sewing machines for making environmentally friendly bags for the community. These are then given away free to promote their environmental aspect.

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2011/2012 (117TH YEAR)

April 2011	12 th 26 th	Environment & Amenities Committee Full Council (Planning)
May 2011	5 th 17 th 24 th	Parish Council Elections FULL COUNCIL MEETING (AGM) (Cricket Pavilion) ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (St John's Centre)
June 2011	7 th 21 st	Administration & Resources Committee Planning & Projects Committee
July 2011	5 th 19 th	Environment & Amenities Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Harvel Village Hall)
August 2011	2 nd 23 rd	Full Council (Planning) Full Council (Planning)
September 2011	6 th 11 th 20 th	Planning & Projects Committee Civic Service – St John's Environment & Amenities Committee
October 2011	4 th 18 th	Administration & Resources Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Cricket Pavilion)
November 2011	1 st 15 th 29 th	Planning & Projects Committee (Budget) Environment & Amenities Committee (Budget) Administration & Resources Committee (Budget)
December 2011	13 th	FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Budget) (Cricket Pavilion)
January 2012	3 rd 17 th 31 st	Full Council (Planning) Planning & Projects Committee Environment & Amenities Committee
February 2012	14 th 28 th	Administration & Resources Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Cricket Pavilion)
March 2012	13 th 27 th	Full Council (Planning) ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (St John's Centre)

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2012/2013 (118TH YEAR)

April 2012	17 th	Planning & Projects Committee
May 2012	1 st 15 th 29 th	Environment & Amenities Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (AGM) (St John's Centre) Full Council (Planning) (if required)
June 2012	12 th 24 th 26 th	Administration & Resources Committee Civic Service (St John's Church) Planning & Projects Committee
July 2012	10 th 24 th	Environment & Amenities Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Harvel Village Hall)
August 2012	7 th 21 st	Full Council (Planning) (if required) Full Council (Planning) (if required)
September 2012	4 th 18 th	Planning & Projects Committee Environment & Amenities Committee
October 2012	2 nd 16 th 30 th	Administration & Resources Committee FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Cricket Pavilion) Planning & Projects Committee (Budget)
November 2012	13 th 27 th	Environment & Amenities Committee (Budget) Administration & Resources Committee (Budget)
December 2012	18 th	FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Budget) (Cricket Pavilion)
January 2013	8 th 22 nd	Full Council (Planning) (if required) Planning & Projects Committee
February 2013	5 th 19 th	Environment & Amenities Committee Administration & Resources Committee
March 2013	5 th 26 th	FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Cricket Pavilion) Full Council (Planning) (if required)
April 2013	9 th 16 th 30 th	ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (St John's Centre) Planning & Projects Committee Environment & Amenities Committee

All Meetings will be held in the Windmill Chamber and begin at 8.00 p.m. unless otherwise advised. If meetings shown as Full Council (Planning) are required, they may be either in the morning or the evening, to be decided close to the date concerned.