

DRAFT Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting of Harberton Parish held at 7pm on Tuesday 7th May 2024 at Harbertonford Village Hall

In attendance: 29 members of the public, including councillors.

Meeting convened and chaired by: Douglas Hambly, Chair of Harberton Parish Council

Notes: Cat Radford, Clerk to Harberton Parish Council

Agenda

1. Parish Council Chair's welcome and report

Cllr Hambly welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting of Harberton Parish, reminding attendees that this is not a Council meeting, but a meeting of the electorate of Harberton Parish. The agenda for the evening's meetings falls into three main parts: to hear updates about activities taking place in the community; to discuss some key issues that Parish Councillors are interested to raise with members of the community and for members of the community to have the opportunity ask questions, make comments about issues of importance.

Your Parish Council

Elections Whilst local elections have just taken place in some areas of England last week, elections in the South Hams District took place in May last year (2023). David Camp, Richard Morris, Tania Paine and Nick Williams were elected as Parish Councillors to the Harberton Ward and Peter Beamish, Chris Bowley and Jill Davies were elected to the Harbertonford ward. Shortly after, Douglas Hambly was coopted as councillor to the Harberton Ward and Hannah Palmer as councillor to the Harbertonford Ward. Prana Simon was thanked for her service, having stepped down as councillor to the Harbertonford ward prior to the election.

Vacancies There remains one vacancy in the Harberton ward and two in the Harbertonford Ward. The Council is keen to co-opt new councillors to fill these vacancies as soon as possible. Serving councillors would be pleased to speak with anyone interested in learning more about the role.

Remembering past councillors The Chair took the opportunity to remember councillors Steve Hockings, John Hockings and Gwen Janes who sadly passed away this year. All three served the Parish Council for many years. John and Gwen had been bestowed the titles of Honorary Freeman and Honorary Freewoman of the Parish in honour of their length of service.

Clerk This May marks 10 years of service for the Parish Clerk, who joined the Parish Council in May 2014. The Clerk was thanked for her work in support of the Parish Council.

Main projects this year

The Neighbourhood Plan A small group of committed volunteers has made considerable progress in drafting a Neighbourhood Plan for the Harberton Parish. For those who haven't been following the process, a Neighbourhood Plan gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. In this last year:

- A Community Conversation took place in Harbertonford CE Primary School in June 2023 to review the main priorities and objectives in Neighbourhood Plan, based on residents views about what people love about living here, what challenges we foresee over the next 10 years, what we'd like to see happen by 2033 and how this could be achieved.
- A Design Code for the Parish was drafted and published, which presents a summary of the key characteristics which make Harberton Parish a special place to live and visit. This information is used to inform specific guidelines to inform new residential development proposed in the Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Area.
- A 'Site Options Assessment' was published in November 2023, that assessed 17 sites that had come forward and establish which of those sites are suitable, available and likely to be viable for development.
- Planning is now in place to consult with the community in July this year on those sites identified as suitable for development. The Neighbourhood Planning Group is working hard to have a new draft of the plan ready to share with the community in the summer.

A381 in Harbertonford A Community Speed Watch group continues to meet regularly to monitor speeds of vehicles passing through Harbertonford Village. Following strong support in the community Devon County Council proceeded with road layout changes proposed for the A381 in Harbertonford, that saw the zebra crossing moved in response to concerns about safe crossing at the original site. The Parish Clerk has received messages from residents who wish to thank the Parish Council and all the volunteers that help with speed counts and liaison with the County Council to sort out the moving the pedestrian

crossing, commenting that it is now so much safer and great to have cars slowing down through the village.

Flooding in Harberton and Harbertonford On Sunday 17th September 2023, significant flooding was experienced across Devon as a result of an intense rainfall event. Watercourses overtopped and drainage systems became overwhelmed from large amounts of surface water runoff, which led to multiple properties flooding in Devon. The worst affected areas were Kenton, Exeter and Topsham, Harberton, Harbertonford and Cullompton, in addition to many other locations across the County. Of the 237 residential properties that suffered internal flooding in Devon, 38 were in Harberton Parish. 15 properties were reported to have flooded in Harbertonford from the main river and surface water and 23 properties experienced internal flooding in Harberton from surface water and an ordinary watercourse, with large volumes of mud, straw and other debris being deposited throughout the village. A local Environment Agency rain gauge in Harbertonford reported 40mm of rain falling in two hours.

In response to the flooding event a multi-agency meeting was held at which representatives of Devon County Council Highways and Flood Risk Management Team, Environment Agency, South Hams District Council and Parish Council (as the representative for local residents) came together to discuss ways to mitigate future flooding events. The Parish Council and Harbertonford Village Hall Committee has worked together on a small grant application to purchase 'easy to access' equipment and resources for residents when they are in need, and supporting community spirit (i.e. residents helping each other) when emergency situations, such as flooding, arise.

Issues going forward

Alongside consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan that will continue to take place this summer, the Parish Council is considering its response three key issues: ongoing services for young people in the Parish; ongoing issues of parking in our villages; financial support that can be given to community groups in the Parish – thanks to the availability of the Community Benefit Fund.

The Parish Council has a modest precept and the councillors serving the community take the responsibility on how it spends its budget seriously. It is also aware that services previous offered by County and District Councils are eroding, due to budget cuts, and Parish Councils are taking up the slack. It is hoped that in discussing these issues with members of the community at this meeting will help councillors understand the views of the community in order to help make decision on spending public money, particularly when it comes to raising local taxes to support continuation of services.

Thanks

The Chair of the Parish Council closed with a round of thanks, thanking Parish Councillors for the voluntary time they give to the Council, to the Clerk and to the members of the voluntary Neighbourhood Plan Committee. Thanks were expressed to everyone in the community who volunteers their time and effort to make Harberton Parish a great place to live.

2. Annual Reports from groups and organisations who have agreements with, or funding from Harberton Parish Council or the Harberton Parish Community Benefit Fund.

2.1. The Harbertonford Community Limited (*Harbertonford Shop*) Verbal Update from Steve Woollett, Chair of THCL

Steve became Chair for The Harbertonford Community Limited, the social enterprise that runs the shop, a month ago. Steve took the role over from John McKay, and much credit was given to John for getting the initiative off the ground. Thanks was given to the Parish Council for the grant from the Community Benefit Fund that supported the supply of a chiller cabinet for the shop, perhaps boring but a very necessary and useful purchase. Receipt of the grant also helped to unlock a larger grant of £10,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund. Thanks were given to volunteers, there is now a great mix of paid staff and volunteers working in the shop. The project needs more volunteers so please do get in touch if interested.

Since taking over the business, investment has been made to bring the building up to legal health and hygiene requirements. To meet its 'break even' target, the shop needs to make £6,000 per week, so everyone was encouraged to keep using the shop regularly to help. It is expected that the target will be met as improvements to the shop continue. More efforts will be put into marketing to encourage more villagers and people in the wider area to regularly use the shop. Ideas for a community space, such as a small café are in the pipeline. Steve closed by thanking everyone for their support.

2.2. Harberton Playing Field Association (HPFA) *Verbal report from John McGuinness and Jonothan Stirrup Treasurer and Secretary of HPFA.*

The committee is thin on the ground, with 3 or 4 voluntary members, with some occasional volunteers coming forward to swell numbers on organised work days. Grass cutting is a key job for the group, if anyone is keen to join, please get in touch.

The HPFA was thankful to receive a £1000 grant from the Community Benefit Fund this year, which was essential for works required to repair the swings. John commented that before joining the HPFA he didn't know how expensive these things were. A local engineer was contracted to help make the swings safe and fit for purpose – 'future proofing' them through this investment. There is still a lot of equipment that needs improvement.

Last year HPFA was successful in obtaining a grant of £11,500 to improve the surfacing in the playground. Underneath the swings and roundabout now have soft rubber crumb, but there continues to be a need to get the surfacing done around the horses, monkey bars and climbing frame. The HPFA is very grateful to have been in receipt of local funds, but if anyone has any more ideas to help get more money through the door, please get in touch.

HPFA has been seeking to engage with other people and groups in the community, and has collaborated with Sustainable Harbourne Valley on projects.

2.3. Harbertonford Playpark Improvements Committee *Verbal report from Peter Beamish, member of the Playpark Improvements Committee*

Similarly to the HPFA, a key role for the Harbertonford Playpark Improvements Committee is in staying on top of grass cutting and managing playground maintenance. A new 'park action' committee has now been established and bank account opened. Having removed the rotten wooden play structure from the park, and with a grant from the Community Benefit Fund, the committee is looking to make simple fixes to the remaining equipment. Peter happened to have with him a broken piece from one of the animal springers, commenting that big companies like Wicksteed aren't set up to help with small fixes to equipment over 10 years old, rather seeking to make new sales at thousands of pounds an item. Discussions are taking place to construct a play ship out of oak as part of plans to install new play features.

The group has got a lot of fundraising ideas and is aware that lots of people appreciate the playpark as it is a quiet safe place to play and enjoy.

2.4. Harbertonford Allotment Society *Written report from Hilary and Jeremy Thorn, Co-Chairs of Harbertonford Allotment Society*

What a year! Weather is key to gardeners and 2023 has thrown everything at us! A number of named storms, including 4 in the autumn, so far and, not to be outdone, a drought and hosepipe ban in the summer. Who would want for more? Despite this less-than-ideal weather, growers have done great things and the allotments have been the picture of productivity.

Our first formal gathering was the Work Day on 25 February 2023. As luck would have it, the weather was kind to us and a most productive day was the result. As ever, there was hedging to do, to keep our boundaries in check. Led by Greg Ward, the members set about dealing with the top hedge, providing an effective boundary for stock and an ideal haven for birds and wildlife. The HAS Shed required some tender love and care in order to maintain its integrity. With the aid of bottle jacks and some good honest muscle power, we managed to make it look less like the Little House on the Prairie and more like a useful storage shed. With the promise of some manure, the gate at the southern end of the field was readied. Finally it was time to see if our investment in a barn owl box had paid off. Some of our more adventurous and lithe members got ladders and with brave hearts had a quick look see. We regret to report that so far no barn owl had taken up residence, We live in hope particularly as the mice and vole population seem to be immune to the weather!

Shortly after the Work Day, our southerly neighbour, John Attree, delivered a trailer load of farm manure. Not yet ready for immediate use, it was covered and left to mature. It is pleasing to note that the pile has now reduced considerably and we trust the ground will benefit in 2024.

It is with great thanks that we benefitted from a generous donation from the South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Locality Fund. Our existing mower was showing its age and in danger of becoming dangerous! With an injection of £300 into the funds, we are able to purchase a new, wider mower to maintain the grass paths across the plot.

Having survived the Spring weather, we went into a dry June! Hosepipe bans were flying about so there was a regular gathering of allotmenters in the early evening to water young veg. Arm muscles have been thoroughly tested as watering cans were filled and delivered. We promise that the phrase "Going to water the plot" was not some cover story to adjourn to the pub. Having nursed our produce through the dry June, then July which can only be described as a wash out! Whilst it reduced the watering requirement, it did mean that that well-known gardeners' friend, the slug, made an unwelcome reappearance. The eternal battle goes on. With no use of dangerous chemicals, we are holding our own, but it's more of a marathon than a sprint. The lovely late sunsets over the summer did not help those torch bearing slug seekers that patrol their plot once darkness falls! A number of plot holders had their thriving broad bean crop decimated by, what? There were various suggestions such that we were thinking of having a prize for the correct answer as to what the culprits were. Suggestions from squirrels, giant slugs, birds and larvae were all made, but the true answer remains a mystery! Any ideas Oh council members??

Our Open Day was scheduled for 9 July. For once the weather was kind and it was pleasing to welcome a number of visitors to the site. The usual supply of excellent cakes may have had something to do with it! Most visitors were suitably impressed; it was however a bit of a shock when a keen gardener from afar was keen to find out when potato blight had got to the site! Perhaps we'll get a credit in his PhD thesis. As ever, through the generosity of plot owners, HAS funds benefitted to the sum of £85 through the sales of veg and produce. Our thanks to all those who provided items for sale. As an innovation, Tim Ferry of Moors Trees gave a most interesting and informative talk on trees to many allotmenters and visitors at the Sustainable Harbourne Valley plot. Our thanks to Tim.

The Harbertonford Flower and Produce Show coincided with Storm Antoni! Sensibly the usual HAS stall out on the football field was shelved; chasing the gazebo down the river was a less than appealing occupation for a Saturday afternoon. Despite the weather, allotmenters featured well in the prizes. The Summers took the "Best Veg Exhibit" prize with their 3 carrots, as well as scooping prizes for cakes and jams. Jenna won a variety of prizes, including Best Allotment, Biggest Marrow, and a variety of awards for her jams and veg. Sue Deakin clearly has a way with onions; her 3 prize specimens swept the onion competition!

The autumn came quickly and the SW Water hosepipe ban persisted. Unfortunately too someone told the weather gods and we have been blessed (some would say over-blessed!) with rain. Thankfully the allotment survived the September 17th deluge, which was quite a surprise, but one could argue that the multitude of fruit and veg and variety of plants" growing in the wrong place", held the slope together. Some veg have thrived; courgettes have gone into overdrive but rot and mildew made an unwelcome return.

On a serious point: With grateful thanks to Jemma, Hilary and Jeremy learnt that if a squash/melon-type plant germinates on its own, in your plot, the squash/melon-like fruits that grow along the branches can not be eaten; in fact they are very poisonous!!!!!! So pull them out and discard however tempting it may be to let them grow. The NSALG magazine, as it happens, we discovered later, has an article about this problem, which causes and has caused serious and sometimes lethal poisoning.!

As the final external event of the year, we met for the Autumn Work Day on 14 October. The weather was kind, except for a cooling shower mid-morning. The usual "Strim the Top Bank" task was undertaken, with strimmers hard at it and a team of barrowers shifting the cuttings to compost heaps across the site. Greg continued his hedging activity, with a team of intrepid volunteers working at the base of a steep bank. And the HAS communal area received a welcome weed and spruce-up to see us through to next year.

Since the Work Day, it could be described as wet!! Some members have persevered and kept going; others are waiting for a bright afternoon before venturing back up to their plot. Safe to say, the mower is staying firmly in the shed; the grass is wet! Pleasingly plots remain fully subscribed with a waiting list should members decide to depart. It's been a congenial year, despite the weather and its always pleasing to see produce heading down the slope to supplement the menus across the village. Lets hope 2024 can provide a more stable weather environment but no promises.

2.5. Sustainable Harbourne Valley (SHV) *Verbal report from Richard Morris, trustee of Sustainable Harbourne Valley*

Trees SHV now has a micro tree nursery at the allotment, and a tree give-away took place in both villages this year.

Bees An amazing bee talk was held at Harbertonford Village Hall, one of a number of talks that have gone very well throughout the year. Attendees heard how the humble solitary bee is not so humble after all. A bee brick making event also took place.

Frees A give and take day took place, an ultimate form of recycling, fresh fruit and produce has been distributed round the year and a wildlife gardening booklet provided free to every house in the parish

Pees The 'citizen science' water monitoring project sampling water quality in the Parish water course and some of its tributaries is ongoing. Residents may have seen some of the yellow fish signs that have been installed near drains and gullies, reminding people that everything that goes down the drains goes into the river and ultimately to the sea.

Seeds Wildflower seeds have been gathered and swapped.

Weeds are just wildflowers growing in the wrong place. There is now enrichment of the environment at Harberton Church Yard following a talk on the subject.

Feeds An apple day was held at the fruit corner in Harbertonford Park in September.

Plans Sustainable Harbourne Valley is making contributions on the topic of sustainability within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

2.6. Harbertonford Christmas Tree Fund *Verbal report from Frances Harvey*

The fund has been running for approximately 30 years by the late John Horswill, sadly his family are unable to continue with this. That's to a grant from the Community Fund in 2023 there is some money to carry this on. Hopefully some new members of the community will come forward to keep this lovely tradition going. It entails sourcing and erecting a tree by the church. There is a new set of lights, the electricity is sourced from the church. No-one needs to finance this, it just needs some willing/strong men to make it happen, please.

Carols round the tree is a tradition enjoyed by many plus it makes a lovely sight for all who live in the village, or who pass through. Please don't let it die. Thank you.

2.7. St. Peter's Church *Verbal report from Frances Harvey, Churchwarden*

As Churchwarden of St. Peters I present the annual report. We are a very small committee of 3 and the vicar, we are grateful for the help we get from members of the community, especially those who help keep the churchyard tidy after it has been professionally mown approximately 3 times per year. There is also a lovely little garden, but we are desperately looking for help with this. We get some lovely ladies who help with the cleaning and also brass cleaning. Our services are down to one per month, always 3rd Sunday at 3:30pm. At our recent Annual Meeting it was agreed to keep the Church open and running for the coming year, but we are very unsure what the future holds. We are very grateful to the Parish Council for the annual grant towards the maintenance of the churchyard. Thank you.

2.8. St. Andrew's Church *Sally Watson, St Andrew's Church Parochial Church Council*

We are so grateful for the grant of £500 made to us in respect of the graveyard last year and indeed in previous years also.

Whilst the graveyard is kept tidy by the generous efforts of volunteers there are occasional expenses in making repairs. These are largely concerned with safety aspects. Such a one occurred in 2022 when a vault collapsed. Efforts to find the family who owned the vault (not surprisingly) bore no results, so the church had to bear the costs totalling over £4,000. The Parish Council grants given over a number of years were helpful with this.

2.9. Harberton Church Community Fund (HCCF) *Written report from Liz Fearn, Trustee of Harberton Church Community Fund*

The aim of HCCF is to provide and assist in the preservation, repair, and improvement of the fabric (and its monuments, fixtures, fittings, furniture and other chattels) of St Andrew's Church, Harberton for the benefit of the public and the promotion of stronger communities.

The events we organise in our efforts to raise money for these improvements are intended for the enjoyment of everyone in the parish and are specifically designed to promote a sense of community. The

biggest event of the year is The Christmas Tree Festival and in 2023 we asked for, and received, a grant from the Community Benefit Fund, for Christmas tree stands and improved lights. We were very grateful to receive £700 and the work of putting up and decorating the trees was made much easier. The festival was a great success with an opening party for villagers and excellent home-made food on sale each day. It concluded with a traditional Carol Service. Well over £2000 was raised for the fund. Thanks again to the Parish Council for facilitating access to the Community Benefit Fund.

We are aware that our long term goals depend on grant aid, which is a lengthy process, but our efforts will continue to be poured into community events that bring us together. The next one is our Wedding Dress Festival in June, to which you are all invited!

2.10. Harbertonford Village Hall Committee *Verbal report from Rob Summers, Harbertonford Village Hall Secretary*

During the last 12 months Harbertonford Village Hall has been re-establishing itself as a social hub to the community after the restrictions placed on us all by Covid-19. Whilst not yet up to pre Covid-19 bookings, bookings have shown a steady increase and bar takings continue to provide a healthy income. Regular quizzes, jazz evenings, skittles competitions and a range of other events have meant the Hall's finances have remained steady. There have also been a Silver Band Christmas concert, bingo sessions, ceilidhs, the Summer Flower and Produce Show, the successful inauguration of the Ford Fiesta event in early September as well as numerous private bookings for parties, wakes and other events.

The bar area has been painted, pictures hung and a projector and screen have been purchased. Wi-Fi has been connected and hence card payments are now possible at the bar. Thanks to the grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council along with a £400 donation from the Ford Fiesta committee, 21 new comfortable banqueting chairs have been purchased. It is hoped to be able to purchase more of these in the near future.

There are now plans to modernise further the interior of the main hall - with a grant from the Lottery Community Fund - by installing an insulated suspended ceiling with down-lighters and an enhanced fire alarm system. This will likely also involve the demolition of the raised stage and the lowering of its floor to the same level as the main hall.

2.11. Harberton Parish Hall *Written report from Liz Fearn, Chair of Harberton Parish Hall Committee*

We have had a fairly uneventful year at Harberton Parish Hall, but have been kept busy with regular maintenance issues.

In May 2023 the interior walls of the hall were repainted by a volunteer workforce. We were grateful to Peter Cogley for the use of his spray painting equipment which speeded up the process, and to all those who gave over a weekend for this task.

In June, our cleaning team retired. Flip Williams and Phil Sheardown had given us three years of excellent service, but we were very fortunate to have them replaced by Nicola Pierce from Ivybridge who is extremely reliable and seems to enjoy the flexible hours that are necessary to fit in with our bookings.

Two members of our Committee, Jan Culf and Rachel Lester, resigned at the AGM in July. Both expressed their willingness to remain active in supporting the hall and in November they completed the Risk Assessment that was due. This showed up a number of items that needed attention, all of which have been fixed. Since then, Nick Williams and Brenda Ganter have both resigned, though Brenda, like Jan and Rachel, continues to undertake various practical tasks for us. We look forward to the Parish Council finding a replacement for Nick as our liaison person, as we very much valued his input. Our committee is now quite small and we will be actively looking out for more members at the AGM.

Like everyone else in this time of rising prices, we have spent much time over the year considering our finances. Since the Covid pandemic our annual income has dropped below our outgoings, despite healthy bookings. We have raised our hiring fees and will do so on an annual basis as long as it remains necessary. We have also discussed running fund raising events, in addition to the annual Pantomime (which this year raised £3,300). We held a village Walk and Quiz, which was well received and raised £300. Other events are in the pipeline. In order to facilitate catering at such events, two of our committee members have achieved the Food Hygiene certificate. We use volunteer labour and skills wherever possible for maintenance. I have already mentioned the painting and recently a working party spread a load of gravel in the car park and on the vehicular slope leading to the front door, which has greatly

improved appearance and access. We considered having the slope professionally sealed, but decided this was not a good use of funds. However, we are aware that there is a drainage issue which may need attention in future. It may also be necessary to replace the roof in 15 to 20 years and with these issues in mind we have opened a second, interest bearing account, to provide a basis for future capital expenditure.

Our

March accounts showed £14,326.24 in the current account and £5,000 in the second account.

We do not have any major projects in mind for the coming year but we have begun to think seriously about the best way forward for sustainable energy and are seeking advice in this area.

Our aim, as Trustees, is to continue as responsible custodians of Harberton Parish Hall, which we believe to be an excellent amenity for all our residents and an attractive venue for those in the surrounding area.

2.12. Harberton Feofees Harberton *Verbal report given by Jean Blackler*

The United Parochial Charities of Harberton (Harberton Feofees) is a charity set up by various parishioners in the late 1800's and early 1900's and subsequently registered with the Charity Commission in the early 1960's. Its aim was to support the poor of that time and bags of coal were distributed at Christmas. In later years this was changed to cash gifts and then supermarket vouchers. A portion of the charity funds are paid to St Peter's and St Andrew's churches annually.

Over the latter years it has become very difficult to determine which villagers are in need as many of the original beneficiaries are no longer with us and support from Government is more readily available. This past year donations were made to those in the parish who suffered with the flooding, together with donations to the churches. A further donation was made to the primary school which has been used to have a storyteller visit.

This is a small charity with a limited income and distribution is usually made annually in the autumn. The charity is run by appointed trustees, church wardens and the vicar who can advise if they feel there is someone in need of support. For example, this could include severe illness requiring frequent trips to hospital, to help with the cost of parking, or maybe there is another reason someone could do with a bit of help. Any application would be discussed privately. Please just contact Mrs Edwina Hookway, (Chairperson) or myself.

This past year we have lost three trustees – John Hockings, Isabelle Steer and Paul Anning, who were all stalwarts for many years in running the charity. If you feel you would like to become a trustee to support with the administration of the charity, the existing trustees would love to hear from you. There are usually only two meetings a year. Contact email addresses have been shared with the Clerk. Thank you.

2.13. Harberton Cricket Club *Written report from Jamie Fitzpatrick, grant applicant and club member*

As promised, here is a short summary of what your grant enabled and what we plan moving forward.

With the equipment that your grant allowed us to buy we have already initiated and run 4 months of hardball cricket practise through the winter at Totnes Leisure Centre. Moving into the summer, we will be offering hardball cricket for 10 to 12 year olds for the first time in a number of years. We hope to play friendly cricket matches with other clubs and continue to allow the children to develop their skills. In parallel to the hardball, we will be offering again the all stars and dynamos sessions for the younger kids. This is our 3rd year running the kids cricket, we have grown from 20 children first year to an expected 40 to 50 this year. Our volunteer pool has grown and we are looking at ways to further develop the offering in the coming months and years.

Thank you so much for your grant last year. Without it, we would not have been able to offer any hardball cricket and would not be able to help the massively enthusiastic group of 11 and 12 year olds carry on with their cricketing journey.

Sorry for the brevity of the update but please be aware that myself and the other volunteers are massively grateful for your support.

2.14. Harbertonford CE Primary School *Written report from Academy Head, Anne Burns*

This year has been another busy and successful one for the school. We are, as always, extremely grateful for the support from our community from the growing number of local volunteers who regularly come in to support reading within the school to the park committee who have involved the children in the

park redesign project, the Ford Fiesta Committee, who funded a day of drumming workshops for the school and HBF Flower and Produce Show Team, who have included the children in this year's show. It is really important for the children to be at the heart of their community to develop their understanding of belonging.

We are delighted that our termly community teas, when the children cook something and share it with members of the community, continue to be well attended and anyone who would like to receive an invitation to our next one should contact the school office.

A huge thank you to the Harberton Parish Community Benefit fund for awarding a grant of £785 to our PTFA to support our planned "Moor to Sea" mural in the playground. The children will be working with local artist Gavin Middlewood later this term to design and create this. Thank you also to the United Parochial Charities of Harberton (Feofees), who have funded a storyteller day for the school later at the beginning of May.

The Trust business team have secured a grant from the Condition Improvement Fund to replace the school's roof. This should be completed before the start of the Autumn term.

On close of the report, a vote of thanks was given to Mrs Burns, who will be leaving her role as Academy Head at the end of the summer term.

2.15. Harbertonford CE Primary School PTFA *Verbal report from Lucy Mannion, PTFA Chair*

The PTFA thanks the Parish Council for the Community Benefit Fund grant to design and paint the playground mural mentioned in Mrs Burns' report above. The mural will be an interactive piece of work, something that the children can use as a backdrop in their play and to incorporate targets for games, for example. The project will be launched in June, with the artist visiting the school to talk to the children about their design ideas, and painting will take place in July. Once completed, the project will be featured in the school newsletter and a press release issued.

The PTFA is raising funds this year to refurbish the school library, alongside projects it regularly funds to support transport to swimming lessons in Totnes, supporting access to trips for those families who couldn't otherwise afford it, and other equipment and activities in the school that the central budget can't afford. A big aim for the PTFA is to get rid of the decommissioned swimming pool and turn the ground into an all-weather pitch, ideally.

School budgets are tight, especially in a school with fewer than 90 pupils and for the PTFA's fundraising efforts, there aren't that many families to approach for donations, so an ambition for fundraising is to widen the net and reach people in the wider community and to work with other local community groups. A village quiz was held in Harbertonford Village Hall that made £700 for the PTFA, and links have been made with the FordFiesta festival too.

2.16. Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project *Verbal report from Jacqi Hogson (Chair of Trustees), Ed Vidler (Trustee), Kerry McCabe (youth worker and TRAYE project manager) Laura Hamlyn (youth worker) and four young volunteers.*

As the Chair of TRAYE, Jacqi introduced herself and the team and commented that TRAYE was set up as a partnership, supported by Parish Councils that voluntarily manages the project in eight parishes. TRAYE runs a club every two weeks from Harbertonford Village Hall, and has been doing so for a number of years, following invitation from a previous chair of the Parish Council. club has been operating from Harbertonford Village Hall for several years. Over the years, attendance has grown, particularly in the last year. It was commented that the youth workers were using Harbertonford Park in order to meet young people where they were hanging out, but now the young people come and find sessions in the Village Hall and now there is a thriving group. There is a list of 53 active members, with approximately 15-30 young people aged 8+ attending each session.

Sessions include arts and crafts, singing, dancing, playing games out on the field, team building exercises (such as the spaghetti marshmallow challenge) and activities that focus on health and wellbeing. Snacks and drinks are always available, and young people know that they can come and talk to youth workers about things. Trained youth workers can also offer one-to-one support to vulnerable young people and can provide sign-posting to other services. Youth workers have seen relationships develop and friendships blossom between regular attendees, and where there are conflicts can help resolve them through sitting down and having a chat.

TRAYE offers trips during school holidays, which are funded by 'pay what you can afford' donations from families, and with some funded places for those who can't afford to pay anything. Taking opportunities to get involved with community events, TRAYE had a stall at a previous Harbertonford Craft Fair and is looking to be involved in FordFiesta this year.

TRAYE supports young people in learning new skills and practicing skills for future employment. The charity currently has 12 young volunteers working with them, providing training for those young people to become youth workers themselves. One of the young volunteers told the meeting that he is volunteers for TRAYE as well as being a young carer. He enjoys working as a volunteer for TRAYE saying that the relationships they build is important and that he feels that being a young volunteer makes a difference to other young people..

The charity's fundraising helps the sessions remain free and inclusive for all young people, something considered really important to TRAYE.

Funding TRAYE is a challenge. Working across a number of parishes, there was a considerable disparity of who pays what. After talking about this it was agreed that the fairest way forward was to ask all the parishes for the same financial contribution, assuming all parishes have the same fortnightly service. TRAYE costs about £7,000 per year per group. Parish Councils have been asked to meet half this cost, with the remainder met through TRAYEs fundraising efforts to the National Lottery, Awards for All and other funding pots. The business now needs to raise £100,000 per year and therefore TRAYE has to dig its heels in as to what the parishes pay. TRAYE views this as a key service that isn't supplied anywhere else. If a club in Harberton Parish is to continue, the sum of money needed is £3500.

3. Updates from groups and organisations who don't have agreements or funding from the Parish Council but wish to give a community update

3.1. FordFiesta Verbal update from Alison Fisher, FordFiesta Community Group Trustee

The FordFiesta Community Group is a charity that was set up after delivering the FordFiesta festival in September last year. FordFiesta was a relaunch and rebrand of the previous FordStock festival. It was a really lovely day visited by approximately 400 people. It was intended that the event would make enough money to cover its own costs, but it raised enough funds to be able to make small grants to a number of community groups. A number of people at tonight's meeting have commented on being a beneficiary from the funds raised.

It is intended to now run FordFiesta annually, the next taking place on 7th September 2024. Anyone interested in events planning and management should get in touch, as should any musicians, artists, storytellers etc. The group hopes to get a bit more help this year as a lot of help is needed on the day with the bar, the gate and parking amongst other jobs. It is a really lovely community event that was a great success.

4. Discussion topics:

4.1. The value of youth services to the community to receive feedback from parishioners on whether the precept (the Parish Council's portion of Council Tax) should be raised to pay for youth services.

Trustees and staff of the Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project (TRAYE) had already addressed the meeting to talk about the sessions they run in Harbertonford, and the request that has been made for funding.

This year the Parish Council has a budget of £21,364 raised through the precept (the Parish Council's portion of Council Tax) and budgeted to contribute £1500 TRAYE. TRAYE can apply for a further £1000 from the Community Benefit Fund.

In order to meet TRAYEs request for funding in 2025/26 the Parish Council would need to look to raise the precept. At the moment, the £1500 donated to TRAYE from the Parish Councils budget represents 7% of the precept. If meeting the £3500 requested from TRAYE to ensure continuity of sessions would cost approximately 15% of the Parish Council's precept. Until the Parish Council sets its budget in December it is difficult to estimate how much the precept will rise in total, but if using council tax figures from 2024/25 financial, the cost per Band D household would have risen by £6.44 rather than the rise of £3.66 introduced in April.

It was also noted that the amount that TRAYE will request in 2025/26 is likely to also increase. When asked it was suggested it may rise approximately 3% in line with expected inflation. It was commented that the majority of TRAYEs costs is on staffing sessions with paid professionals.

The floor was opened to hear views, most of which were in support of rises to the precept in order for youth sessions to continue. The following comments were noted:

- Harbertonford is a living village where children and young people deserve services. Not all children in the community are affluent. The increase to the precept would be negligible. We need more investment in young people.
- It would be fantastic to fund it, however it would be good to let the young people know that there is a risk of a loss of the sessions and engage them in fundraising to meet the costs.
- There has been a decimation of statutory youth services. The fact that TRAYE and the sessions in Harbertonford exist at all is wonderful and it should be supported.
- A couple of attendees that spoke on the subject had been youth workers or worked in youth services in the past and could see the issue that TRAYE faces. One commented that it is a monumental role that these youth providers have in the community. The price of the increase to the precept is a couple of coffees per household and they would wholly support the increase to invest in young people.
- It was commented that there is no youth club in Harberton any more. Are parents in Harberton aware of TRAYE? Can there be more representation from TRAYE? It was commented by TRAYE's project manager that there are other parishes with two villages, and the youth club has trialled running sessions in one village for half the year, and in the other village for the other half. Some kind of arrangement could be considered in Harberton Parish. Don't have a youth club in Harberton any more. No representation. Is Harberton represented.
- Looking at the figures, it appears that TRAYE is a bargain and offers good value for money. We are fantastically fortunate to have this facility and this service. I have a 13 year old, and knew that TRAYE existed by wasn't fully aware of the range of activities so hearing about TRAYE this evening has been an eye-opener. It would be great to have this facility right in the heart of the community.
- As a parent I am supportive of TRAYE as my family would benefit, but taking a wider view, not investing in youth is a bit of an 'own goal'. Young people need to have healthy, positive activities. It was commented that a loss of services for young people can result in expressions of anti-social behaviour.

Representatives of the community in attendance at the meeting appeared to be in unanimous support of raising the precept to support the continuation of youth services. It was commented that the Parish Council will take information shared at this meeting, some statistics about TRAYEs outputs and outcomes and circulate this along with a survey to canvas views from the community as a whole.

4.2. Parking in the parish villages

It was commented that parking has long been an issue in both villages of Harberton and Harbertonford. Community parking is being facilitated by the Parish Hall in Harberton and the Village Hall, Football Club and Primary School in Harbertonford. The Parish Council owns the car park on Harbertonford Bridge, and it has been suggested that charging for parking on this site during the day could help availability of short-stay parking spaces that could serve the community shop.

Comments were made in support of this, making the point that it is difficult to drop in to use the shop if the few places to stop outside are not available, with a few saying that if they can't stop, they then drive on to find a different shop to do what they need to do.

It was commented that if there was higher turnover in the bridge carpark, alternative parking would need to be found elsewhere to take on those vehicles that would be displaced. It was commented that some residents use those spaces as they have no residential parking of their own.

It was commented that there may be the opportunity for parking at the garage following the closure of the car sales business, although it was noted that the garage runs its own shop.

It was noted that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan includes a draft policy about parking. Wording is loosely based on a policy in the Kingsbridge Neighbourhood Plan. The policy as drafted was read to the meeting, providing a chance for people to comment on the wording, or indicate support or objection.

Neighbourhood Plan (Draft) Policy: Parking

- Development proposals will only be approved if they provide adequate off-street parking.
- Proposals likely to generate an increase in on-street car parking outside the development site will be resisted.
- Development proposals which involve a reduction in car parking facilities used by the public in the settlement in which the development is proposed will be resisted.

There was general support for the policy as worded.

One meeting attendee queried whether the policy could include reference to the creation of shared car parking – i.e. parking that is not only for the use of owners of new development, but community parking.

4.3. Future use of the Community Benefit Fund, *now funds are diminishing, should the guidelines for community grants be changed?*

Meeting attendees were informed that the Community Benefit Fund arises from the contributions from the two solar panel farms operating in the Parish. The fund received a one off payment from one of the solar developments, with the second making an annual payment, the last being received in the 2023/24 financial year.

Of the £76,650 received between 2014-2023, a total of £47,131.48 has been distributed through 53 successful applications so far. There is £29,428.52 left. It is estimated that if distributed at the current rate, the fund will be fully depleted within approximately four years.

Several organisations in the Parish now make annual applications for the maximum grant of £1000, and so the Finance Committee of the Parish Council has begun to question whether a different approach should be taken to maximise the impact of the remaining funds. Should there be a focus on seed funding projects that can be independently sustainable after an initial investment? Should there be a cap on how much is given in a year? Should the amount that organisations can apply for reduce? Should the fund support sustainability or should it just be used until it is gone?

During discussion the following points were raised:

- It was suggested that the fund should continue to be used in the way that it has been to date, but to tighten up the criteria and make the funding process more robust to ensure value for money – asking for more information on researched costings and requiring a report on outcomes of investment.
- It was commented that the remaining funds could be used on a big single project, but others saw this as being potentially difficult and contentious, preferring the remaining funds to go as far as they can.
- It was suggested that those groups making repeat applications should be asked why they should be given money again.
- It was suggested that the criteria include reference to sustainable outcomes. An example given was an application made to insulate a buildings to reduce future running costs.
- One of the groups who has benefitted from several grants over the years commented that they would struggle if they were to be 'cut off' from the fund. Their grants have been used to replace and repair unsafe equipment, and would use any future funding available to future proof the equipment as far as they could.
- It was commented all the groups attending this meeting were running very worthy projects, and had much in common with one another. Most are struggling with the same issues of minimal resources and low numbers of volunteers. Can the parish's community groups do more to share knowledge and experience and learn from each other? Collaboration between community groups could tick a big box for some common funders.

5. Any other business

- The issue of pot holes and the quality of the road surface was raised, but not discussed.
- The young volunteers who attended to support the event by serving refreshments were thanked.
- All members of the Parish Council were thanked for hosting this meeting and thanked for the pots of money that had been made available.