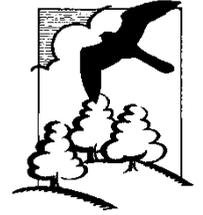


Hello!

I am delighted to be writing my first letter as Chairman of Hawkhurst Parish Council and would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support. I am looking forward to the challenges ahead.



Originally, I had planned to use this letter to introduce myself, but I got side-tracked into trying to persuade you to join the Parish Council. So I will keep this brief. I am sure we'll get to know each other better over the coming months. I am self-employed and provide a range of business admin services for companies both locally and internationally. Prior to this, I was a Primary School Headteacher.

I have lived in Hawkhurst for almost six years, having lived in a neighbouring village for 12 years before that. We chose to move to Hawkhurst because of its wonderful mix of beautiful countryside and facilities. It was my desire to protect this that prompted me to join the Parish Council. I'm a realist. I realise that things will change. Indeed, there are some desperately needed changes - parking and traffic being two that spring to mind. However, this needs to be done in a way that does not harm our village.

As you may know, we have a number of vacancies on the Parish Council. I would like to thank Julia Newman, Derek Blackman and Michael Robertson for their valuable contribution and wish them all the best with their future plans.

Could you join us as a new parish councillor? Before you dismiss the idea, give me a chance to try and persuade you - these are some of the things that crossed my mind when I was first thinking about being part of the council...

### **I don't understand how it all works.**

I'm the first to admit that the procedures can seem off-putting. It can appear a bit formal, and the talk of motions and amendments etc. doesn't bear much relation to most of our lives. As Chairman, I aim to ensure the Parish Council is inclusive. In order to achieve this, I intend to make sure that the processes and procedures are absolutely clear so that all members of the council, regardless of their experience, can contribute fully.

Richard Griffiths, our clerk, has produced an induction pack that will help guide you through the early days and explain everything you need to know. Even more importantly, he'll always make time to answer any questions you may have.

### **I don't have the skills or experience.**

You don't need any particular skills or experience. In fact, there are very few requirements, the most basic being that you should be at least 18, a British, EU or Commonwealth citizen, and live or work in Hawkhurst. Personally, I think the most important thing is caring about the village and its residents, being willing to listen to people, and making decisions based on what is best for the village as a whole. Legal, financial and other skills are always valuable, but so are passion, local knowledge and enthusiasm.

### **I don't have the time.**

Okay, it will take time. There's no getting away from that. Being a parish councillor is a commitment - research suggests most councillors spend an average of three hours a week on council work. You will have to be able to volunteer your time to be a councillor.

### **It's not for people like me or they wouldn't want me.**

If you think this, you're probably exactly who we need! Our role is to represent the residents of Hawkhurst. And I believe we will do this best if the council is made up of people with the widest possible range of views and experiences.

If you're even the slightest bit tempted, why don't you contact Richard on 01580 752058 to have a chat? If you're still unsure, I'd be delighted to meet up and answer any questions.

Clare Escombe  
Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council  
February 2019