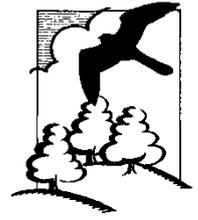


Hello!



I am really pleased that the Parish Council is now up to full strength with the co-option of our latest member, David Blake, who I would like to welcome to the Parish Council. David brings a wealth of experience from a wide variety of community organisations which I am sure he will put to good use for the benefit of Hawkhurst residents.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported our second litter pick last month. There definitely seemed to be less litter than in April, which was pleasing; but it was disappointing how quickly the rubbish reappeared. We will be holding another litter pick in the Autumn - keep an eye out for the notices and come and join us. Hawkhurst is such a beautiful place and it's down to all of us to keep it that way.

There are all sorts of reasons why people contact the Parish Council, but it's fair to say that planning is a key one. You may be aware that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is in the process of producing a new Local Plan. The Draft Local Plan has just been published on the TWBC website as part of the papers for a Cabinet meeting. This is a very significant document as it will form the basis of all planning decisions for the whole of the borough.

This has only been available for a few days so the Parish Council has not yet had the opportunity to meet to discuss it and the implications for Hawkhurst. However, you can be sure that we will be looking at it very closely over the next few months. The Draft Local Plan is a wide-ranging suite of policies, covering all aspects of planning such as infrastructure, environment, recreation and, of course, housing.

The housing allocation for Hawkhurst is around 681 to 731 new dwellings. I can't imagine that there are many people in Hawkhurst who don't feel that those numbers are significant. We all know that there is a housing crisis, but that is still a large number of houses for our village.

It is important to remember that this is still a draft, which will have to go through several stages before it can actually be implemented. The first stage is a public consultation which is expected to run from 20th September 2019 until 1st November 2019. No doubt people will have differing views on the proposals. Whatever your views, I would urge everyone in Hawkhurst to respond to the consultation. This is your chance to make your voice heard on a key document that will have a considerable impact on our village.

It's not the place of the Parish Council to tell you what to think. However, we will be examining the Draft Local Plan closely and will do our best to provide an objective summary of the key points to support residents in reaching their own opinions. Having said that, it is the place of the Parish Council to listen, so please do let us know your views.

Clare Escombe
Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council
August 2019