

Item 7.2 Hawkhurst Community Support Group – May 2020 update

Introduction

Hawkhurst Parish Council, working with local volunteers, has set up **Hawkhurst Community Support Group (HCSG)**. In Hawkhurst there has been a wonderful response to COVID-19 from residents, business and community groups eager to help their neighbours and community.

We have worked with HCSG to formalise this and establish robust systems to ensure that everyone in Hawkhurst can access the support they require given the likely scale of the support needed over future weeks.

At the time of writing 135 volunteers are registered and 160 residents are being supported.

Hawkhurst Parish Council direct support.

On the 24th March 2020 The Proper Officer under agreed S101 delegated powers in Consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman set aside up to £7,000 of financial support for HCSG. This comprises the budget for the Parish Election and Cllr Expenses for 2020/21. This was approved by Council on the 14th April 2020 Council meeting

Initially in the set up phase this funding covered the costs such as the printing of leaflets, posters, flyers and the central phone number. The actual expenditure up to the 30th April 2020 is £1,198.52. In addition, they are working under the auspices of Hawkhurst Parish Council and they are covered by our Insurance.

The Parish Council staff have supported the group with administration and helping with deliveries.

This support pales into insignificance when compared to the resources and time of the volunteers but gave the group confidence and reassurance to evolve. They now have their own Committee, Constitution and bank account.

Next Steps

It is important that we recognise the immense value of the work the HCSG are doing in the village and how successful we have been in setting up HCSG.

However, as HCSG has matured into a fully functioning community group they do not sit comfortably within the structure of the Council.

We have discussed with them being a Committee of the Council, but we agree this would restrict them. We took advice on them being a partnership – but this would have to be in the bounds of Committee restrictions.

Therefore, we need to treat HCSG as we would any other community group and they should apply for funding under S137. They will need to obtain their own insurance cover.

Cllr Escombe would remain as HCSG Chairman but would need to Declare a Pecuniary Interest and not be able to vote at Council on matters relating to HCSG.

Councillors who are volunteering for HCSG would need to declare a personal interest.

Proposal

It is proposed that;

- Council recognises the amazing job that the HCSG has done and is continuing to do in supporting the residents of Hawkhurst in this time of crisis
- That HCSG are a standalone community group