



## Happy Spring 2021

### Mrs Norma Long celebrates 100 years young and counting



Councillor Clare Escombe, Chairman of Hawkhurst Parish Council, said "It is with great delight that we are bestowing the title of Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Hawkhurst to Mrs. Norma Long who is 100 years young and counting on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021."

Norma has spent her whole life living and working in Hawkhurst. She is an independent woman who is everything good about Hawkhurst.

Due to the current circumstance Norma's extended family cannot get to celebrate this fabulous day so our thoughts are with them all.

The residents of Hawkhurst have stepped up to an appeal on social media and have sent numerous birthday cards to the Parish Office and we were delighted to drop them off to Norma along with some flowers and a certificate "Bestowing to her the Freewoman of the Parish of Hawkhurst."

Norma has been a very loyal and enthusiastic member of Hawkhurst Local Historical Society, probably the longest serving member. She is known for her cheese straws which are to die for, as anyone who has attended the social evenings can testify.

Norma is the first person to have the honour of Freewoman of the Parish of Hawkhurst and it is well deserved.

## Parish Council elections 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Are you passionate about your community? Do you want to help make a long-lasting change? Do you have innovative ideas for the council? Do you have concerns about a specific issue and want to do something about it?

**If this is you, then we need you!**

We need people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect the community in Hawkhurst to put themselves forward for the Parish election, 6th May 2021.

You will find everything you need to know at [www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections)

It explains what local councils and councillors do, how you can become a councillor, the details of the role and what to expect. We will offer an induction and ongoing training.

If you want to stand as a Parish Councillor, you must have submitted your nominations forms into TWBC offices by **4pm on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.

The election timetable for the 6th May 2021 elections is at <https://hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Election-timetable-2021.pdf>

## Community events on the Moor 2021

All are subject to national COVID 19 restrictions, weather conditions, appropriate insurance and permissions.

- Fun Fair – set up Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 - Open to public 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- Village Fete - 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- HCT 2018 5k / 10k Fun run (start and finish at Moor) – 27 June 2021
- Custom Car show – 24/ 25<sup>th</sup> July 2021
- Makers@Moor – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Hawkhurst Bonfire – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## Consultations on TWBC final draft pre-submission Local Plan

There is an opportunity to make a formal representation / comment on the TWBC final draft pre-submission Local Plan by visiting;

<https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan>

The consultation period is **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021**.

**Take the opportunity to have your say!**

## Chairman's letter

It is with great sadness that I need to inform you that Cllr Phil Jones has recently passed away. Phil was a longstanding member of HPC and will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this difficult time. Personally, I don't think I ever attended a meeting with Phil where he didn't make me laugh. He was kind, considerate and extremely insightful. He will be a great loss not only to the Parish Council but also to the village.

As you may know, we have elections this May. Over the past few years, I've seen many complaints that too many councillors are co-opted. This will change in May. This is the chance for residents of Hawkhurst to choose the Parish Council they want to represent them. We have 13 councillors on Hawkhurst Parish Council, and all 13 places are up for election. This means that unless 14 people decide to stand for election, all those who do put themselves forward will be elected unopposed.

There is still time to stand for election as a Parish Councillor. The nomination papers need to be submitted to **TWBC by 4pm on April 8<sup>th</sup>**. If you need more details or have any questions, please contact Richard, our Clerk. If you do want to stand, you just need two people (on the electoral roll for Hawkhurst) to support you on your nomination form.

You do not need to have any special skills or knowledge or experience to be a councillor. In fact, you need to be at least 18 years old, a British, Commonwealth or EU citizen, and live or work in Hawkhurst. From my perspective, the fact that you are interested in and care about the future of Hawkhurst and its residents is far more important than any skills or experience, which can be learnt after all.

All councillors on the Parish Council have an equal voice. Decisions are made by voting and no one person's vote carries more weight than anyone else's. So each councillor's vote really does make a difference. The only exception is that the Chairman has the casting vote in the event of a tied vote. However, the Council and its committees all have an odd number of members to minimise the likelihood of this happening.

HPC is responsible for village facilities including Copt Hall, the Sports Pavilion and sports pitches at KGV, The Moor, the playgrounds at Heartenoak and KGV, the cemetery and allotments. We are consultees on planning applications. In addition to the day-to-day work, HPC has a number of major projects that are either currently underway or planned. These include a restoration project at the cemetery and the construction of the Community and Sports Centre at KGV. We will also have to review and update Hawkhurst's NDP within the next year to 18 months.

These elections are your opportunity to influence the future of the village, whether that's by standing as a councillor or voting in the elections. Make your voice heard.

Stay safe,

## Hawkhurst shops get boost from shop local campaign



**Local residents and visitors are to be encouraged to support the shops, cafes, pubs, salons, and cinema in Hawkhurst when the coronavirus restrictions ease in a campaign by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.**

‘Say Hi to your High Street’ aims to encourage people to support traders in the Borough’s four satellite

high streets of Hawkhurst, Cranbrook, Paddock Wood and Southborough once non-essential shops are allowed to open again.

The goals are to encourage people to shop safely and locally, to attract new visitors, to restore confidence and ultimately boost footfall and spend.

Lisa Edwards, who runs interiors and gift store Ooh How Lovely, explained that “business for my shop in Hawkhurst has been a total experience of learning to adapt. It’s vital to have local support but also be available and offer adapted services when situations change.”

‘Say Hi to your High Street’ will run for 10 weeks after the reopening of non-essential shops in April, with two focus weekends on Hawkhurst, timed to coincide with the markets in the Royal Oak car park. **1<sup>st</sup> May will be a Spotlight on Hawkhurst weekend**, including a video showcasing what Hawkhurst has to offer presented by former BBC South East presenter, Rob Smith, delivered across social media. **5<sup>th</sup> June will feature a treasure hunt in the village** with shoppers encouraged to find the clues in different stores.

‘**Say Hi to your High Street**’ will be promoted through PR campaigns, social media, advertising and local influencers.

Any trader wishing to be involved should email Siobhan Stirling of Sharp Minds Communications, who are co-ordinating the campaign: [Siobhan@sharpminds.agency](mailto:Siobhan@sharpminds.agency)

## Hawkhurst in Bloom 2021

Hawkhurst in Bloom is launching their campaign to brighten up the village in 2021.

**If interested in getting involved, please contact 07775 736115**

## Saying Goodbye to 2020 and hello a brighter new year!



Hawkhurst Gang Bonfire Society – supported by Hawkhurst Parish Council - said good riddance to 2020 and welcomed in a New Year with a bright future.

This year's Hawkhurst Bonfire is pencilled in for **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

## Spring forward

It's one of those days in March when you feel the earth begin to awake from its long slumber. The snows are long gone. You can feel the warmth of the sun on your back as you start to trim and dig for the first time since last year.

I have a blackbird that takes up residence in a tree and he sings for all his might morning noon and night.

He heralds the beginning and end of the day and is joined by all the other birds whilst it is still dark, to perform the dawn chorus.

The buds on the hedgerows are slowly bursting and now is a good time to take the top off the hedge before the birds start to nest. A useful suggestion from last year on social media to one of the PC postings. The earliest one can cut a hedge is 1<sup>st</sup> August or 1<sup>st</sup> September so the bird's nest in peace. Farmers do not cut hedges until September.

In sheltered places the crocuses and snowdrops are well out and daffodils not far behind. The catkins have been forming since before Christmas and now hang down as bright, deep yellow catkins showing up against the bark.

It's time to think about getting the greenhouse ready for action and planting seeds.

If you have a large enough garden it can be made ready for planting.

It's amazing how a little sun and warm days' change not only us, but wildlife.

The hedgehogs are so good for the garden eating slugs and snails, I have very few in my garden since the hedgehog has been active, they are so much better than any pellet which is a danger for them and birds and children.

Look at your bonfire before you light to check to see if there is a hibernating hedgehog. Composts and bonfires are the sort of places that any animal will go to hibernate.

In respect of your dog and slugs and snails. They can get lung worm from either if they are infected with the larva from a parasite. Make sure your dog does not eat or lick the slime. It is best to worm your dog with wormer that has lung worm treatment in early spring.

Let's hope as the days lengthen and get warmer, we can return to near normal lives.

## Back ground to Council precept 2021/22

### Introduction

The Parish precepts have now been published for all Parishes - along with those for Kent County Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Police and Fire Service.

Taken together the Band D Council Tax for a Hawkhurst resident is £1,998.20 - the Hawkhurst Parish Council element of this is £114.33 or 5.7%.

### So, what services does the Parish Council provide?

We are custodians of the Parish cemetery, two halls which are used by a variety of community groups, and the building where the Kino is based. We are responsible for: sports pitches; children's' playgrounds at Hartenoak and KGV; the new Multi Use Games Area on the KGV; Ockley and Hensil allotments; and, 165 street lights across the Parish.

We support community initiatives. This year we were instrumental in setting up and supporting the Hawkhurst Community Support Group and their "Food4Families" project.

In addition, we reduced or waived charges for clubs and societies using our facilities and made various grants for things like the Community Fridge and we cut the rent for the Kino to help them survive.

We also scrutinise planning application to try and influence the planners in Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and work to protect the parish from over-development, vehicle gridlock at the Highgate junction and consequential air pollution.

### Precept increase

Despite increasing the Band D Parish charge by £23.08 a year, Hawkhurst still charges less than others - roughly a tenner less than Sandhurst, £20 less than Cranbrook, £30 less than Goudhurst and £40 less than Paddock Wood. Overall, we are mid-table when comparing council tax bills for TWBC's 16 Town and Parish Councils - Hawkhurst is ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.

The tyranny of small numbers means that because the increase is off a small base the percentage increase is stark. But the context is a historic very low parish charge rate, that did not allow for the proper maintenance of community facilities - and adding less than £2 a month to the average (Band D) property still means Hawkhurst provides value - charging between 11% and 36% less than neighbouring parishes.

## So why has the Parish precept total increased by £42,509?

Well, the tax base has reduced as we expect more people to claim exemption and/or reduction from Council Tax, and there have been various adjustments in day to day spend - with some things added and others postponed or cancelled, but principally it is because of three things.

**Firstly**, we have been very cautious about projected future income - which we expect to fall by £23k. We do not expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of income from our sports facilities, meeting rooms and the Kino until 2022/23.

**Secondly**, a one off £30k restoration project for the Parish Cemetery. We had hoped to spread the cemetery project over two years - but the pandemic meant a delay so the whole project will be done this year. Like the recent restoration of the old tennis court to create a fantastic multi-use games area, we are steadily making good on things that had been left to deteriorate.

**Thirdly**, the preparatory work for a potential Community and Sports Centre needs professional architects plans and supporting documents that pass muster from the planners. Whilst we have a special reserve for some of the costs, £35,000 is needed from the Village Fund to enable us to put a fully costed and plan to the village next Spring.

### Parish Council tax comparisons – Band D is mid-point in Council Tax

Parish	Band D Council Tax last year (2020/21)	Band D Council Tax this year (2021/22)	Year on year Change	Compared with Hawkhurst
Sandhurst	£121.61	£126.85	+£5.24 (+4.3%)	£12.52 (11%) more than Hawkhurst
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst	£134.62	£134.35	-£0.27 (0%)	£20.02 (17.5%) more than Hawkhurst
Goudhurst	£143.02	£146.24	+£3.22 (+2.3%)	£28.69 (25%) more than Hawkhurst
Paddock Wood	£156.16	£155.65	-£0.51 (0%)	£41.32 (36%) more than Hawkhurst
Hawkhurst	£91.25	£114.33	+£23.08 (+25%)	

For further information visits on <https://hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk/finance-reports/>

## Update from Strategy, Administration and Projects Committee

Thanks to COVID 19 the last financial year has been tough for many businesses and organisations including the Parish Council. Our non-precept income has been reduced by about 90% while demand for our services has increased. Together with the need for remote working our committee have been focused on streamlining our ways of working and delivering a balanced budget that allows us to maintain services and deliver the revamp of the cemetery and the new Community and Sports Centre.

Underpinning much of our services (which are accessible through our revamped website) has been the need for access to high internet speed. Discussions with local businesses has reinforced this. We have therefore focused on working with BT openreach on a comprehensive survey of IT provision to improve access across the Parish. This should be completed by April 2021.

We will then have a rollout plan to achieve about 95% high speed access to properties in the Parish.

We will then work with the providers and residents to get the remaining properties up to speed. In the meantime, best wishes to all.

## Update on Community and Sports Centre project

The Community and Sports Centre Working Group with key representatives of HCT2018, the trust that will run the building, continues to meet regularly and we will be in a position to submit a planning application as soon as we have received the final technical reports which have to accompany the planning application. Despite delays due to COVID 19, it is hoped that this will be soon after Easter 2021.

### Thank you

The last 12 months has been a very difficult period for many in our area. We were all amazed by those who volunteered to help our community or who bravely kept working through the depths of the Covid-19 crisis, and continue to do so.

### Hawkhurst Parish Council contacts

Email: [office@hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk](mailto:office@hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk) or Phone: Office mobile 07907 022914