



HIGHBROOK, SELSFIELD, SHARPTHORNE AND WEST HOATHLY

PARISH FUTURES GROUP

Report on Findings and Recommendations

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5th October 2009

The PARISH FUTURES GROUP - its purpose and remit

INTRODUCTION

The West Hoathly Parish Futures Group was established following a discussion within the Parish Council in October 2008. Three Parish Councillors undertook to lead the work of the Group and to prepare a report for consideration by the Council on completion.

Two open meetings were held within the community so as to recruit other working members of the Group, a programme of work was agreed and Working Groups were formed. Members of the Working Groups have been involved throughout the process of development of this report.

Many other volunteers helped with the distribution and collection of questionnaires, particularly West Hoathly Scouts.

The Group has been funded by West Sussex County Council's Community Grant via the Parish Council,. The Parish Council has been kept informed of progress with the work, but has had no input into the content or execution of the work.

PURPOSE

The Futures Group aims to:-

- establish from residents in the whole Parish their concerns, aspirations and wishes for developments within the Parish
- identify residents' priorities for changes, if any, in the Parish
- put forward to the Parish Council a programme of projects and/or changes which can form the basis of a Parish Plan with a systematic Monitoring and Action Plan.

PROCESS

The Futures Group circulated 1600 questionnaires to 800 homes in the Parish, and of these, 604 were completed and returned. In most cases, only one questionnaire per household was returned, and it is estimated that returns were received from 525, or 65%, of all households. Delivery and collection of questionnaires took place during April and May 2009.

The data from the completed questionnaires was analysed and is available in its totality as an Appendix on-line from the Parish Council.

Separate responses from the 12-18 year age group(20 in all) was disappointingly low, although it is possible that their views were partially expressed as part of their household's return. Subsequent meetings were held with the Scouts in West Hoathly to amplify the views of this age group. Although the questionnaire was directed to residents of 12 years and older, it is encouraging to note that children at the Primary School developed their own responses; these added a fairly consistent view about life in the Parish and the priorities of young people.

Responses from all those aged 31 and above was encouraging, with a significantly higher than average return, in comparison with the age profile of the Parish contained in the 2001 census, of people over 45 years old. There was a low response, proportionately, from the 19 - 30 year old age group, possibly reflecting a disconnection from more general life in the community.

Although recipients of the questionnaire were informed that additional copies could be obtained on-line, few people used this facility. There was no facility for responding on-line.

Different parts of the Parish responded separately - 32 from Highbrook, 262 from Sharpthorne, 247 from West Hoathly and 73 from the outskirts of the villages.

REPORT

This report is laid out, generally, so that findings from the questionnaire responses are summarised on one page with recommendations for action on various issues tabulated on the facing page. The recommendations have been proposed by the Working Group dealing with the particular topic and shared with all members of the Futures Group; the ideas are not necessarily exhaustive and the rankings of timescales and priorities in the Action Tables are those determined by the relevant Working Group.

THE PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The Futures Group are presenting this report to the community of West Hoathly Parish and to the Parish Council for adoption and implementation.

It is based on a significant questionnaire response from the community, around 65% of all households, and on the work of over 30 volunteers in the community. It is thus a good representation of the wishes, aspirations, and concerns of residents of the communities of Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne and West Hoathly. The changes proposed thus have a mandate.

There are many aspects of community life and facilities which respondents to the questionnaire and the Futures Group feel will enhance the life of the whole community in the Parish. The Parish Council, in conjunction with others, therefore needs to address these aspects and implement a programme for tackling them.

PRIORITY FINDINGS

The main findings from the Questionnaires and Recommendations from the Futures Group are listed on page 14. The Priority Findings which we think should be addressed most urgently are:-

- **Communications within Parish** - generally perceived as only fair or poor. Communications by Parish Council particularly criticised. **ACTION** - Improve by wider use of The Chronicle (or some form of Parish News) and websites, etc.
- **Shop in West Hoathly** - Strongly supported. **ACTION** - Keep pursuing potential options
- **New Housing. ACTION** - Encouragement of affordable/sheltered housing, preferably on 'brownfield' sites.
- **Allotments** - more required. **ACTION** - Increase provision.
- **Facilities/activities for young people** - inadequate and sometimes poorly maintained. **ACTION** - provide additional facilities, e.g. skateboard park, improved play and/or sports equipment. Improve maintenance generally.
- **North Lane Recreation Ground(NLR)** - Pavilion and Toilets came in for particular criticism, other facilities generally only fair. Support for concept of new community building - although this might not necessarily be on NLR. **ACTION** - Start to think about new community building and improvements to the Rec generally, including car parking.
- **Parking in villages and on Top Road. ACTION** - increase provision generally. Improve parking around Image Cross and Sharpthorne Shop.
- **Traffic speeds, safety and HGV traffic** - still a big concern for the community. **ACTION** - Find further ways of reducing speeds and research restrictions on HGV's. Clean signs and cut back overhanging growth.
- **Pavements and Pedestrian Crossings** - often perceived as narrow and inadequate. **ACTION** - review and assess options for improvement.
- **Public Transport** - widely perceived as inadequate. **ACTION** - work to improve service.
- **Policing** - police activities not widely known. **ACTION** - Encourage greater PCSO involvement and visits throughout the parish.

LIVING AND WORKING IN THE PARISH

VILLAGE LIFE IN GENERAL

Unsurprisingly, virtually everyone who responded enjoys living here. A combination of pleasant villages and quiet rural surroundings, together with a strong community spirit, makes this an enjoyable place to live in. Local amenities and the proximity to nearby towns were mentioned by smaller numbers; only 4% of respondents identified family ties in the area and this may have implications for support in the community in later life.

A number of adverse comments were noted, particularly concerning traffic and public transport – these are discussed later in this report.

PARISH COHESION

West Hoathly Parish covers a large geographical area, but the majority of its population is concentrated in the villages of West Hoathly and Sharpthorne. Although physically close, they have distinct identities and communities. In addition, the settlements of Highbrook and Selsfield, the communities at Brook House, Courtlands and Stonelands, and many of the outlying properties may not naturally relate to the centre of the Parish for many reasons, including physical distance.

A small, but significant, number of respondents stated that they did not feel attached to any part of the Parish, and it is not clear why. Additionally, only 44% felt that they belonged to the Parish as a whole, although a similar number felt an attachment to the part in which they live.

VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

An encouraging 51% of respondents are either already involved in voluntary activities and groups, or would like to be; almost half of these would welcome the opportunity to be more involved. Clearly there is a potential resource base for future Parish initiatives and projects.

COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE PARISH

“The Chronicle” has become as effective a method of keeping people in touch with local events as word of mouth (72% of respondents for each). Notice boards, and to a limited extent local newspapers, are also effective, but village/church websites do not generally (11%) seem to be reaching their audience, except in Highbrook.

However, although information about events is apparently widely available, only 29% of respondents felt that communications within the Parish were good.

The Parish Council faced rather more criticism, with 457(75%) rating the publicising of their activities and decisions no better than fair; 23% rated this aspect as poor.

83% of respondents have access to the internet; there is no evidence of frequency of use.

Reception quality for radio and television is reasonable; however mobile telephone signal quality remains patchy throughout the Parish, and in Highbrook, particularly, is poor (62%).

LOCAL BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT

There are a very limited number of existing businesses which are used on a regular basis within the Parish. Although the services they provide are well regarded, there is widespread support (81%) for expansion of their businesses and for establishing new ones.

The only retail businesses in the Parish are in Sharpthorne, and over 50% of West Hoathly respondents specifically commented on the need for a general & food store in West Hoathly. There is also a demand for a petrol station; some respondents asked for improved Post Office services.

JOURNEY TO WORK

Around one third (131) of respondents currently in employment work in the Parish, or from home; 38% (158) work in local towns, and 29% commute further afield (London, Brighton etc).

Of the total who travel to work, only 54 people use public transport at all - 9 bus and 45 train - and 76% (296) drive a car or motorcycle for all or part of their journey.

Comments from respondents identify the unsuitability of public transport for working people, on the basis of accessibility and timing. Clearly, local public transport is totally inadequate for anything other than a leisurely journey to a minimal number of destinations (or going to school!). Further comments on this aspect are found in the Traffic and Transport section.

Issue	Ideas for Action	Possible Timescale	Priority
Engagement of under 30's in the community as a whole.	Parish Council to find ways of appealing to this age group more effectively - perhaps promoting/encouraging more community social activities.	Medium term	Medium
Feeling of belonging to part of the Parish rather than the whole.	Parish Council to encourage understanding of composition of the Parish and ensure that its policies & resources are seen to benefit the whole community.	Medium term	High
Voluntary groups – significant interest in becoming involved.	Co-ordinated distribution of information about activities, requirements and opportunities, both at Village and Parish level.	Medium term	Medium
Poor communications within the Parish (with notable exceptions). Parish Council failing to communicate well.	Capitalise on success of The Chronicle in conjunction with Parish Council and local businesses and advertisers. Consider more regular publication, with meaningful input and financial support from PC.	Short term	High
Websites not reaching their audience.	Use successful models to improve Parish Council and Church websites. Parish Council to publish planning applications, budget, accounts, Council and Committee meeting minutes on their website.	Short term	High
	Consider incorporating locally relevant information from District and County Council websites into Parish website.	Medium term	Low
Mobile phone coverage patchy & unreliable.	Proliferation of service providers and geographical limitations probably preclude meaningful action.		
Shops – support in West Hoathly for a shop/store, and for more shops in general.	Possible WH initiative for a co-operative venture (similar to Post Office in Horsted Keynes), but to be commercially viable would need active local commitment.	Short term	High (in West Hoathly)
Local Businesses	Publicise other local businesses so as to encourage awareness and support.	Short term	Medium
Local pubs to continue as pubs.	As above – no customers, no business.	Short term	High

HOUSING, CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT

ADDITIONAL OR NEW HOUSING

The great majority of respondents were opposed to the development of additional housing on 'Greenfield' sites with some 75% against and only 7% for. Views on the development of 'Infill' sites was divided with equal numbers of respondents for and against, 40% for, 41% against.

The most popular view was to use 'Brownfield' sites - previously developed land in already built up areas - with 59% for and 24% against.

If additional housing is built, the strong majority was for social/low cost housing, sheltered or other accommodation for elderly/infirm and it should be of an environmentally friendly design.

Respondents were more divided on whether they were well informed about Planning Applications in the Parish, with some 42% indicating they were and 50% indicating not. Some suggestions were made that Applications should be available on the Parish web site.

CONSERVATION

Retention and improving the visual aspect of the existing Conservation Areas in Highbrook and West Hoathly was strongly supported and ranged between 58% for improving and up to 69% for retaining these areas. Extending the Conservation Areas received a somewhat higher level of objection at 15% of respondents, with 31% either having no opinion or feeling that they felt it was 'not applicable'. Clearly the subject of the Conservation Areas should be recognised as important to the Parish.

The preservation of established trees and hedges was seen as very important with 91% of respondents supporting this.

Equally strongly felt was that of the need to consider the impact of any development on the rural character of the area with over 93% expressing this view.

The majority of respondents felt that reducing the number of road signs was not an important issue in terms of conservation aspects.

Almost all respondents use footpaths in and around the villages; around a third rate the standard of paths, stiles and signs as 'good' whilst 14% of users judged these 'poor.'

ENVIRONMENT

Generally, respondents were satisfied with the waste collection arrangements from homes and with the emptying of public and dog waste bins; of particular note were that the collection from homes received an 84% positive response. There were some comments that more dog owners should use the dog waste bins provided.

A clear majority, 60 - 70%, of respondents wanted to see environmental initiatives such as solar panels, wind turbines, biomass boilers and community composting considered within developments, for individual buildings in the area or as community schemes.

The extending of the village allotments was seen as important, with 440 replies in favour.

Of less importance was the need to promote car-sharing schemes, e.g. for journeys to the station or for shopping, with only just over half of the respondents wishing to support such a scheme.

Issue	Ideas for action	Possible Timescale	Priority
Opposition to the development of Greenfield sites and concern for infill developments	Communicate District Council Policy more widely. Develop a PC Policy so that local views are better represented and considered within planning decisions.	Medium term	High
Development of Brownfield sites	Encourage additional housing on these sites with social/low cost and/or sheltered housing to environmentally friendly designs	Medium term	High
Being well informed about Planning Applications	Improve all forms of communication within the Parish on planning matters	Short term	High
Management of the Conservation Areas	Clear communication of Councils Policies. Develop new policies to enhance Conservation Areas with timely consultation regarding any proposed changes. Ensure any new development is in keeping.	Medium/long term	Medium
Preserving trees and hedge rows	Find ways of preserving this aspect of the local environment	Medium/long-term	High
Environmental and energy improvements to buildings and areas	Research and promote means of encouraging such initiatives in the Parish	Medium/long term	Medium
Allotments	Increase provision of allotments for residents of the Parish	Short/medium term	Very high
Footpaths	Improve general standard of footpaths within the Parish, possibly using volunteer groups for this alongside WSCC and landowners	Medium term	Medium

AMENITIES, FACILITIES, HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION

AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

The majority of adults (63%) use some facilities and rate them good or fair. However the majority (66%) of younger age groups - teenagers/young adults - do not use facilities in the Parish, and those who do find them poor; only 3 respondents considered these good. Those Senior Citizens who use facilities or amenities in the Parish (37%) find them generally fair.

Sports facilities are used by 52% of respondents, grading the facilities as generally fair.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS, PRE-SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Only a quarter of children use after-school activities; 21% of respondents judged facilities good, the rest judging them fair (41%) or poor (38%).

Various suggestions were made for pre-school children, e.g. need for hours to suit working parents. 77 people said they would use after-school clubs. 73 would like holiday play schemes, while 33 would welcome a breakfast club. 41 respondents said that they would use childminders.

It was also suggested that West Hoathly Primary School should be more publicised and needs to be more part of the community. The replies suggested that only about half of children of primary school age appear to attend, or are likely to attend, the Village School, the rest going outside the Parish, either elsewhere in the public sector or in the private sector.

PLAYGROUND AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

Most users of Sharpthorne and Hook Lane Recreation Grounds, and of Finche Field, reported satisfaction (i.e. good or fair), but only 49 replies (11% of those replying to this question) rated the facilities at Sharpthorne Old Playground as good, 98 rating these poor.

There were also criticisms of North Lane Recreation Ground (NLR) with most replies to this question rating the facilities as a whole as fair or poor. Only around 2% of replies rated the pavilion and toilets as good.

The main suggestions were for better play equipment, facilities for teenagers such as a skate park area, improvements to the toilets and pavilion, and parking on the North Lane Rec.

At the same time as the questionnaires were being completed, there was also a petition with 62 signatures presented to the Parish Council, mainly from Broadfield and Ridleys residents, both young and older, for a skate park to be constructed on the North Lane Rec.

These findings were generally in line with the findings from the more specific enquiries amongst children as on Page 13.

VILLAGE HALLS

Although Highbrook Village Hall, Sharpthorne Community Church Hall, the School Hall and Sharpthorne Legion Hall were only used by a minority of all respondents, most were satisfied with the facilities. Highbrook Village Hall was used by almost all Highbrook respondents who rated it as good; similarly the School Hall was largely rated as good by the 30% of respondents who use it.

West Hoathly Village Hall was well used (over 60% of respondents) compared with the other halls. The main criticisms were of the catering/kitchen facilities, and the stage area.

A substantial majority (overall 63% for, 30% against) would support a new building to provide healthcare, sports, education and social facilities under one roof. When looking at the replies of just Sharpthorne residents, the proportion in favour rose to 76%.

The questionnaires did not contain any questions about the use of the hall at Hoathly Hill which is also available for a variety of uses.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Most residents seem to find access to a local doctor and community health services as easy or acceptable. The most common wish was for a doctor's or health centre in the parish, although some of those who are probably part of the Crawley Down practice referred to the usefulness of the doctor's clinic at St. Dunstons.

Issue	Ideas for action	Possible Timescale	Priority
Facilities generally for teenagers and children	Implement improvements to facilities on North Lane Rec, Sharpthorne Rec and Old Sharpthorne Rec. in line with questionnaires. Improve maintenance standards, including Hook Lane Rec.	Short/medium term Short term	Very High High
After school activities and holiday play schemes	Ask children and parents what they want, find out who can supply. Discuss with school.	Short/medium term	High
Breakfast club for schoolchildren	Liaise with parents and school to assess demand and how to supply.	Short/medium term	Medium
Childminders	Assess demand and investigate how this could be organised.	Short/medium term	Medium
Primary School in the community	Develop ways of integrating the facilities, activities and existence of the school more into the life of the whole community.	Medium term	Medium
New community building	Investigate feasibility of new building with health and other facilities. Perhaps look at buildings in other villages such as Turners Hill and Rotherfield for ideas.	Long term	High
North Lane Recreation Ground Pavilion and toilets	Parish Council to prepare scheme for upgrading/replacing - possibly in conjunction with new community building above.	Medium term	Medium
Improve WH Village Hall	Improve kitchen and catering facilities, stage, changing and toilet facilities.	Medium term	Medium
Clinic in parish	Could be part of new community building - in interim raise issue with other local medical practices.	Short/medium/long term	Medium

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT IN THE VILLAGES

The car is the main method of transport for the majority of people within the Parish. The replies recognised the fact that the road through Sharpthorne and West Hoathly, the C125, has been progressively getting busier and is now a “rat run” between the A22 and the M23. The majority of the comments focused around speed of traffic, parking and the level of HGV traffic.

The initial findings for both car drivers and pedestrians were very similar:-

- Amongst motorists, almost twice as many people (62%) supported further traffic calming as opposed them - but not at the expense of more traffic signs; amongst pedestrians, 58% were in favour and 27% against further traffic calming measures.
- It was felt (59%) that there are too many road signs at present.
- 64% of motorist respondents thought that hedges should be cut back and/or mirrors installed to improve visibility.
- A lot of respondents (58% of motorists and 56% of pedestrians who replied to these questions) remarked on the parking of vehicles and were keen to see restrictions on where vehicles should be parked.
- 54% of those who replied to this question called for additional/wider pavements and almost as many for additional road islands and/or crossing points, mainly in Top Road.

There were a number of comments around the parking on Top Road at Image Cross, but conversely this does act as a very good traffic calming measure. Almost half who replied to the question about speed limits would support both its reduction and an extension of its boundaries.

DANGER SPOTS

Of all the “danger spots highlighted in the questionnaire there was substantial agreement (around 80% of those who expressed a view) about improving the junctions at:-

- Selsfield Road with Ardingly Road and Vowels Lane
- Chapel Row and North Lane
- Top Road at the Intrepid Fox.

A smaller proportion (55%) was in favour of improving the Horsted Lane/Top Road junction. Highbrook respondents were in favour of improving road safety within Highbrook village (75%).

ADDITIONAL PARKING PLACES

With regards to off-street parking places most people (54%) were keen to see this on the North Lane Rec; around 40% were also keen to see additional parking at Finche Field/Hook Lane.

BUS SERVICE

On average, around 60% of respondents expressed an opinion on bus services, this figure being fairly low perhaps because not many people use the present services. The majority of these said that they would use the bus service more if the timetable was changed (67%), if the routes were changed (58%) and if reliability improved (54%). Cost did not appear to be a deterrent.

VEHICLE RESTRICTIONS

Finally there was a large response (474 - 78%) from people wanting to see a reduction in the number of HGV's currently using the main road through the village; they would support restrictions on vehicle size and weight (except for access).

GROUP COMMENT - 'QUICK WINS'

From the results obtained there could be some very ‘quick wins’ in achieving some of the requirements detailed by the parishioners:-

- 1) Cut back vegetation around existing road signs and clean them so that they are clearly visible. Remove unnecessary signs.
- 2) Make the exit of North Lane onto Chapel Row a more pronounced ‘no right turn’.
- 3) To ease congestion in West Hoathly village divert the bus route along the Hollow and Chapel Row and provide a formal bus stop in Chapel Row.

Issue	Ideas for action	Possible Timescale	Priority
Parking	Negotiate parking for Organic Café at Sharpthorne Church Hall. Create extra parking North Lane Rec. Ground & Finche Field Change parking at Image Cross so there is always a 2 car gap. Sign for Highbrook car park + light	Short term Medium/long term Short term Medium term	High High High Medium
Speeding	Install speed cameras near Stonelands & near Intrepid Fox. 20mph limit in West Hoathly. 40mph limit to Tyes Cross Research further measures for speed reduction.	Short term Medium term Medium term Medium term	High Medium/low Medium Medium
H.G.Vs	Investigate potential enforceable restrictions on HGV's using roads in the villages as through routes, particularly Top/Selsfield Road.	Medium term	High
Pavements	Total review of pavement widths and possible extensions. Install pedestrian road crossings in safe position near Intrepid Fox & Cost Cutters.	Short term Medium term	High High
Signs	Signs to be cleaned, free of foliage and clearer. Improved sign No Right Turn at North Lane/Chapel Row. Signs for Finche Field parking	Short term Medium term Medium term	High High Medium
Visibility, hedges and mirrors	Cut back foliage/trees - pavement near Bulldog Bank - in The Hollow - on Church Hill +sweep road	Short term	High
Dangerous junctions and roads	Carry out safety assessment of 4 junctions identified. Assess safety of road through Highbrook	Short term Medium term	High Medium
Public transport	Review and change bus timetable to suit journey to work, and more frequent/regular services - using smaller buses. Relocate West Hoathly bus stop to avoid North Lane	Medium term Short term	High Medium

SAFETY AND SECURITY

GENERAL

We were most encouraged by the responses, and amused by some of the comments! For example:

'Sense of community keeps us safe'

There were a range of comments made by individuals who clearly have a problem in a specific location, rather than as a general problem.

HOME SECURITY

In answer to the questions about home security, just under a third (32%) were concerned, but only 17% had been a victim. It was significant, but expected, that these proportions were higher in Highbrook and on the outskirts of the main villages. Slightly larger numbers were concerned about fuel theft (34%); 40% were worried about 'cold callers' and 32% about vandalism.

Relatively few (15%) were involved in 'Neighbourhood Watch', but 38% (of those not already involved) would be interested.

PERSONAL SAFETY

46% felt safe from traffic whilst walking around our villages, but 34 respondents commented on the need for reduced speed of traffic. An overwhelming 93% felt 'personally safe' when walking around the villages and local area.

DOGS

Dogs (fouling) appears to be a problem - this was the only specific comment made by more than one respondent. Only 10% were aware of the existence of the Dog Warden.

POLICE

44 people, mostly from Sharpthorne, wrote in that they would like more local policing.

Issue	Ideas for Action	Possible Timescale	Priority
Police and Cold Callers	Publicise the contact number for the Community Police Officer and encourage villagers to meet him/her. Make more opportunities around the villages for people to meet and see the PCSO - particularly in Sharpthorne.	Short Term	High
Dog fouling	More publicity and make aware of the Dog Warden. Through the Chronicle	Short term	Medium
Neighbourhood watch	Encourage involvement	Medium term	Medium
Community Spirit and Feeling	Encourage an even greater spirit of 'togetherness' and 'good neighbourliness'	Short term	High
Home security	This is something that the Community Police Officer can help with.	Medium term	Medium

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTIONS

OUTCOME FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

5 key findings came from the 20 young people, aged 12 - 18, who completed the questionnaires:-

- Most of the respondents enjoy living in the villages and appreciate the quiet yet friendly nature of their surroundings. Several comments were made about 'having nothing to do.'
- Transport difficulties were raised in almost all of the replies; all wanted improvements to bus services. These difficulties made it hard to get to see friends.
- With regard to facilities generally, most felt that activities for teenagers were poor and that Sharpthorne Old Playground was particularly poor. So far as the North Lane Rec was concerned, their views tended to rate the standard of facilities as poor, occasionally fair.
- There was good support for the concept of a new building with provision for sports and social facilities. [One comment suggested that better use be made of existing buildings]
- Improvements suggested included a skate park, either in West Hoathly or Sharpthorne, larger goals and proper pitch drainage at Sharpthorne, arranged activities or sport tutoring for teenagers and a shelter for them to meet in.

FEEDBACK FROM CHILDREN OF WEST HOATHLY PRIMARY SCHOOL

All the children at the school were invited to respond on an individual basis, in whatever way they felt comfortable, to 4 standard questions about living in the Parish, what amenities they used and what improvements they would like to see. 55 pupils completed this questionnaire.

- More than half expressed appreciation of village tranquillity and 22% referred to the kindness of people. Adventure play in and around the Parish was appreciated by 21%.
- 69% of the children used the village recreation grounds. Other facilities used by pupils included the cricket ground, village halls, church and (surprisingly!) public houses.
- 42% believed that the village would be enhanced by additional shops for food, drink, etc. Improvements to the range of play equipment were requested by 33% of respondents whilst 20% specifically suggested a skate park on NLR. There were suggestions also for a designated picnic area at NLR, and other improvements, including flowers, more shade, and water features.
- Among the more unusual requests were minority votes for chickens, posters of Michael Jackson, a hotel and a petrol station!

MEETINGS WITH WEST HOATHLY SCOUTS

It was no surprise that Scouts aspire, firstly, to a new scout hut in Hilltop Road and that it should be better built, better equipped and more spacious than the existing.

They echoed pleas for improvements to facilities on all recreation grounds with emphasis on more opportunities for sport and games. They suggested that the Basket-ball area on North Lane Recreation Ground would be better used if it was large enough for a team game to be played and if goals were also provided. Scouts were aware that other young people aspired to a skate park on NLR but for them this was a minority interest. Public toilets on NLR need improving.

Maintenance of some existing sports amenities is also an issue for Scouts who use the recreation grounds at Sharpthorne and Hook Lane. Hedge maintenance and the quality of the pitch and goal posts in Sharpthorne were a deterrent to usage. They would also like to see wickets and cricket nets improved on Hook Lane Rec.

Scouts confirmed that they are frequent users of bus services and this is the main means they have of travelling from and to the village. Whilst they seemed to have adapted to a limited timetable they would welcome an increased frequency of service.

They would greatly value the restoration and retention of a general grocery shop at West Hoathly. Unmade road surfaces and absence of lighting at night were amongst other issues raised.

FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

These responses highlight the - very important - need to improve facilities in the Parish for young people and children. Detailed action items within the Facilities Table on Page 9 seem to reflect this need and we have highlighted their priorities.

OVERALL CONCLUSION & SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Futures Group are presenting this report to the community of West Hoathly Parish and to the Parish Council for adoption and implementation.

It is based on a significant response from the community, around 65% of all households, and on the work of over 30 volunteers in the community. It is thus a good representation of the wishes, aspirations, and concerns of residents of the communities of Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne and West Hoathly. The Report thus provides a mandate for change on many aspects in the Parish.

A Summary of our main recommendations for action is:-

- **Communications within the Parish** need to be improved and **More Cohesiveness across the whole Parish community** should be developed.
- **Shop in West Hoathly** - Efforts to reinstate a shop should continue.
- **New Housing** - Encouragement of affordable/sheltered housing, preferably on 'brownfield' sites. Reaffirm policies opposing additional housing on greenfield sites.
- **Conservation** - Develop policies for enhancement of the Conservation Areas. Ensure that there are effective means for conserving trees and hedgerows.
- **Allotments** - More allotments to be provided.
- **Provide addition facilities/activities for young people** - e.g. skateboard park, improved play/sports equipment in North Lane and on Sharpthorne Rec. Improve maintenance of facilities on all Recreation Grounds.
- **Primary School**. Integrate school and its facilities more into whole community.
- **North Lane Recreation Ground** - There is support for the concept of a new community building, although not a stipulation that it has to be sited on NLR; this needs to be seriously investigated. Alternatively, in the short term, upgrade the Pavilion and Public Toilets. Make improvements to the Rec generally, including car parking.
- **Parking in villages and on Top Road** - improve provision generally and look at parking by Image Cross and near Sharpthorne Shop.
- **Pavements and Crossings** - often perceived as narrow and inadequate. Carry out overall review to identify improvements needed to improve safety.
- **Traffic speeds and HGV traffic through villages** - develop ways of achieving further speed reductions. Investigate how restrictions on unnecessary heavy traffic can be implemented.
- **Road Safety** - Review junctions, and road through Highbrook. Improve signage around North Lane/Selsfield Road junction. Clean signs generally, remove surplus signage and cut back overhanging growth in several locations.
- **Public Transport** - work to improve service frequency, look at feasibility of smaller buses and reroute from North Lane/Church Hill.
- **Police** - Establish new ways for community residents to know/meet/see the PCSO across the whole of the Parish.

NEXT STEPS

1. We believe that the ideas contained in this report can form the basis for a programme of projects and changes for the whole community and that the Parish Council should take the lead role in initiating these. We acknowledge that some of the ideas and suggestions contained in the report are outside the normal scope of activity, control and resources of the Parish Council; it is therefore up to the Council, as best it can, to work to influence others, e.g. other local authorities, transport operators and healthcare providers, police, etc., so that the envisaged changes can come about.

2. We also acknowledge that the Parish Council, on its own, has very limited resources, both in terms of finance and in personnel. These should not be seen as reasons for avoiding taking forward the suggestions in the report. A way to overcome these constraints is to widen the involvement of people from the community, in particular, so as to utilise the goodwill generated by the work of the Futures Group and its members. This could be done by establishing Working Groups in the Parish which can be given responsibility for investigating and even implementing some of the suggestions contained in the tables of the report. Such groups would therefore have a mixture of Council and Lay members.

3. The Council and Working Groups will need to look comprehensively and creatively at the availability of outside resource/financial help for some of the suggested changes and/or projects.

4. Finally, we consider that there should be a joint Parish Council/Futures Working Group charged with monitoring progress on the recommended actions. This will provide an incentive to ensuring that timely progress is made on all aspects which are important to the community. Such a group should meet at least 6-monthly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Many people in the community have been involved in the work of the Futures Group and in preparing this report. The names of those whom we can specifically identify are listed overleaf and below, but there are many others to whom we owe our gratitude for their thoughts and ideas, etc. We thank them all for their contributions.

We would also thank specifically:-

- the members and Clerk of West Hoathly Parish Council for their support and encouragement in the work of the Futures Group,
- Dataflow for their data entry and analysis of the questionnaires
- Identity Consulting for design and artwork for the questionnaires and the Summary Report
- West Sussex County Council for their financial contribution
- Action in Rural Sussex for their advice and encouragement, and
- Costcutters, Sharpthorne

In particular, we should also like to thank Jon Martin of the Horsted Keynes Parish Plan Group and Rodney Saunders of the Balcombe Parish Plan Action Group for their advice on the process which we have used for the work. We have been very conscious of not trying to 'reinvent the wheel' in many of the things that we have done!

FUTURES GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Steering Group members

Jill Carter
Peter Hartley

Bob Darvill
Keith Rogers
Clem Watson

Emma Fulham
Richard Toomer

Members of Working Groups

Carolyn Bentley
Anne-Marie Dawson
Karen Gould
Marion Jones
Elizabeth Tamburrini

Lucy Comber
Bev Duncanson
Frieda Gray
Colin Robotham
Clem Watson

Molly Cooper
Brenda Farley
Neil Greatorex
Keith Rogers
Rosemary Williams

Delivery and Collection of Questionnaires

Many of the above, and:-

Ken Allfree
Sue Burrows
Emma Davies
Jean Kingsley-Monks

Steve Brand
Sue Chamberlain
Alison Denley
Kathy Merry
Richard Ward

Paul Brown
Basil Cridland
Lorraine Howard
Derek Shurvell

West Hoathly Scouts and members of their families

FURTHER DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

- Original Questionnaire - on the Parish Council Website
- Total Numbers and Percentages from the Questionnaires - on the Parish Council Website
- Summary of Individual Comments from the Questionnaires - on the Parish Council Website
- Statistical analysis of questionnaires in total and by residential location - on application to the Parish Clerk
- Parish Futures Group - Overall Summary - to be delivered to every household at the end of October.

PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE - www.westhoathly.gov.uk

PARISH CLERK:- Telephone - 01342 811301 or e-mail clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk

FURTHER ENQUIRIES

The Futures Group welcomes further enquiries about their work, ongoing plans and opportunities for further involvement. Please telephone any of the 3 Parish Councillors who have been involved in the work of the Group:-

Bob Darvill 01342 810443

Emma Fulham 07941 021179

Peter Hartley 01342 811238

5th October, 2009