

Hever



Four Elms



Mark Beech



The Parish Plan 2013

Please
come to the
launch meeting
in Hever Village
Hall on
22 January at
8pm

Introduction

Hever parish, the three villages of Four Elms, Hever and Markbeeche is a unit of local government, and its churches together make up the United Benefice of Hever. Whilst all share the characteristic of being much loved by their residents, they are otherwise very different and one size rarely fits all. This plan recognises that fact and does not aim to homogenise the parish; instead it aims to enable each village to develop as a community and to plan for the future of this beautiful area.



The questionnaire

The Parish Plan Questionnaire was written following open meetings in the three villages where the main issues to explore were identified and a copy was sent to each adult on the electoral roll, the congregations of the churches and to "involved others". We had responses from 205 households, 47% of the Parish, and from 12 households outside the parish boundary. Not everyone answered every question. The responses were mainly in by Christmas 2011 and during 2012 they were collated and discussed. This leaflet is a short summary of the results; all the data collected can be found on the website www.hever.org

The plan

This plan has four purposes (at least!):

1. It is a record of our parish in 2011; the data will be a useful source of information for decision makers for some years to come, and to historians of the future.
2. It has galvanized a range of actions recorded below
3. It has provided a wish list of actions for the future.
4. Along the way all sorts of small connections have been made e.g. we have found drivers for Edenbridge Voluntary Transport Service and helpers for the schools.

Get involved!

A great deal of activity is already underway as a result of the questionnaire responses, and more is planned. If you are interested in getting involved with the projects described here, or suggesting a new one, please email parishplan@hever.org or get in touch via www.hever.org/parishplan. You will find contact names, email addresses and some Google Groups on that page. If you do not use the internet please ring Joanna Wade on 01732 868085, we are very happy to provide paper versions wherever we can. Lots of people offered help in the Questionnaire and we are working through the data making contact with you as efficiently as we can. Please forgive us if we fail and please don't give up! It is not too late to get involved!



1

A profile of the Parish

Respondents to the questionnaire love the rural beauty and the peace and quiet of the area. They also appreciate being able quickly to get to London and onto a motorway. Most find their community very friendly although some would like this to improve.

Four Elms

Based around a large pond, the fine Church built in 1881 features beautiful windows and mosaics in the Arts and Crafts style; the architectural designer of Liberty's of London was involved in the design. Four Elms has a primary school, which has recently built extensions to its classrooms and offices, a thriving cricket club, two community halls, a small village shop, a filling station and other shops and businesses. For the last 60 years the Four Elms Village Fete has been a much loved summer event.

There are 230 households (of which 40% responded to the Questionnaire) and about 557 residents. 22% of residents are aged 18 or under, 13% 19 to 35, 47% 36-65 and 19% over 65.

Hever

The castle, the family home of Anne Boleyn, sits at the centre of the village alongside the medieval church where Thomas Bullen is buried, the Henry VIII pub, the parish field and the village primary school. Slightly down the hill are the shooting range and the village hall. Hever is a dispersed village with a good number of fine houses dotted around, including at How Green to the east, and a second pub, the Greyhound, on Uckfield Lane. There is a Hever History Trail on www.hever.org

There are 197 households (of which 59% responded to the Questionnaire) and about 494 residents. 25% of residents are aged 18 or under, 11% 19 to 35, 54% 36-65 and 10% over 65.

Markbeeceh

At the heart of Markbeeceh (or Mark Beech, no one can agree!) is a collection of Victorian cottages clustered around the church, designed by the eminent architect, David Brandon, and the 18th century Kentish Horse pub. The parish was created by a successful railway lawyer, John Chetwynd Talbot, in 1852, and his family still live there. Perched high on a ridge reputed to be the route of a ley line, Markbeeceh offers fine views towards Ashdown Forest and across the Eden valley.

There are 48 households (of which 42% responded to the Questionnaire) and about 121 residents. 22% of residents are aged 18 or under, 10% 19 to 35, 43% 36-65 and 26% over 65.

Edenbridge Town, Sevenoaks District and Kent County Council

The three villages are closely connected to the nearby town of Edenbridge with its shops, leisure centre and museum. Edenbridge Town Council www.edenbridgetc.kentparishes.gov.uk is responsible for a range of local facilities and the district is run by Sevenoaks District Council www.sevenoaks.gov.uk with some local services, notably schools and highways, run by Kent County Council www.kent.gov.uk

2

Communications

Many respondents are keen to keep in touch and get involved. Currently people find out about local events through word of mouth and the parish magazine, the Link, roadside posters, and the local paper. The Hever Residents Association sends out newsletters and the Gowers, who deliver the newspapers, sometimes circulate flyers with them.

We asked how communications could be improved and, in order of popularity the suggestions were:

- An e-newsletter. This is now going out via www.hever.org every month. If you want to subscribe you can do so through the website.
- Up to date website(s). There are at least three websites in the area: hever.org (run by the Parish council for the community), hever-ra.org.uk (run by the Residents Association) and 3spires.org.uk (run by the church), all wish to remain independent but have agreed to share information, try to avoid duplication and to link through to each other. The Parish Council has decided to fund the cost of keeping www.hever.org up to date.
- Posters are an important method of communicating too and the Parish Council is going to erect a few more notice boards.
- A parish calendar. www.hever.org has a community diary on its home page which will advertise all community events, great or small. The Link also welcomes copy, the deadline is usually the 15th of the previous month. It has a monthly diary and a wide circulation to around 300 households.

- The idea of a village newsletter, in addition the Link which is the magazine of the Benefice, is popular but given the wide distribution of the Link and the growing popularity of electronic communications this does not seem viable. If you would like to subscribe to the link please email Daryl Roxburgh: link@roxburgh.nu

Broadband

89% of respondents use Broadband and 58% reported problems with speed or reliability, 86% of those wanting to upgrade to a high speed service. Difficulties ranged from many not being able to use iPlayer, children not being able to access the internet to do their homework, commuters unable to work from home and small and large businesses literally in peril because they could not compete with businesses in "faster" areas.

We have sent the data to Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council and have been supporting the "Make Kent Quicker" campaign to win funding from central government to do just that. We are hopeful of success at the time of writing.



3

Village amenities

Groups and events

There was wide support for more community activity, and 60% would travel to other villages in the Parish to use their facilities. The following have been ranked by popularity:

- 1 Community shop (80%)
- 2 Live music (78%)
- 3 More social events (73%)
- 4 Live drama (63%)
- 5 Film club (52%)

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) advises us that community shops need huge local support if they are going to work. Would it work with the Co-op so near and home deliveries so easy? The community shop/ farmers market idea will be one of the subjects for discussion at the Parish Plan launch meeting on 22 January 2013. If you can get involved please go to www.hever.org/parishplan or email Laura Palmer at shop@hever.org.

After the very successful jubilee celebrations in the three villages the way is clear for more events to follow and if you would like to organise one there are some ideas on what to do on www.hever.org/parishplan

More than thirty five active local groups were identified, their names and contact details are on www.hever.org, and the Link will run a list from time to time.

Respondents identified a multitude of other activities that they would like, the most popular being dance, Pilates, exercise and yoga classes. There is also interest in music, art, language, history and other cultural activities, and in clubs for toddlers and

Hever village hall



young people. A few people would like to join a computer class, bingo and a bridge club. There are a few contact names on www.hever.org but at the moment demand outstrips supply. Let us know if you can change that.

We asked what events people attended and the most popular were fetes followed by fireworks. Markbeech "Hair of the dog" and carols were next with other HRA and Hever Horticultural Society events and harvest suppers also popular. There is a calendar of events on www.hever.org and in the Link. Both will advertise an event at no cost.

Village halls Markbeech

The facilities offered by Markbeech hall (which houses the Mark Beech nursery school) attracted much praise – ideas for improvements in facilities in all the halls have been fed back to all the village hall committees. These included WiFi and broadband, a cinema screen and sound system and lightweight chairs and tables. People also suggested various activities such as community fruit and veg selling when there is an autumn glut, children's activities and an item exchange for books, cds etc (Cowden is using its old phone box for that purpose!), as well as more social events.

Hever

78% support the expansion and redevelopment of the hall to include drama, sporting and other facilities. 69% support a move in principle to the Parish Field. There are strong opposing voices too and, of course, many practical impediments in the way. In 2000 the village considered whether the hall should be redeveloped and/or moved to the parish field and opinion was divided. In the end the planners said that they would not support the sale of the current site for building homes to fund the move, and that was the end of that. Improvements have been

made to the Hall over the years but there has been no funding for major works. There is currently an exploration of whether it is possible to green up the centre of Hever by redesigning the Henry VIII car park to make it more convenient for the pub and the school and to improving access to the parish field. This would allow for redevelopment of the hall in the future, but not without a full consultation. There would need to be a village meeting and a separate committee formed to take the feasibility study forward.

Four Elms

Four Elms has two halls: a village hall on the road out towards Sevenoaks and the Parish Rooms next to the church; quite a few respondents did not know that both existed! We asked if there should be just one hall instead. Opinion was divided as residents recognised the value of both halls, which are very different. The feedback has gone to the two committees.

Sport

We are a healthy parish! Far and away the most popular sport amongst residents is walking, 87% record that they enjoy it. The next most popular was swimming (42%) followed in descending order by keep fit, golf, tennis, cycling, dancing, running, cricket and ending with horse riding at 15%. 150 people partook in other activities, including yoga and pilates, fishing and sailing.

If facilities were available locally 30 people would like to play tennis. One idea is to organise tournaments on the private courts in the area and another is to develop a court on a piece of public land, if you would like to get involved please email sport@hever.org. Twelve people would like to play cricket and 11 badminton. Four Elms Cricket Club has a membership application form on its website: www.fourelmscricketclub.co.uk. Falconhurst cricket club in Markbeech is also open to new members – phone or email the Captain Rob McAllister on 07884 483855; captain@falconhurstcc.co.uk

Only 21% of respondents use their village hall for sport/leisure activities. Could facilities in the halls be improved to make them more available for Pilates/yoga and sports such as badminton? 72 people would like to do Pilates in their village hall, 59 to do yoga, 19 keep fit/ aerobics and 18 would like to play badminton and dance. This information had been fed back to the village hall committees.

Four Elms Recreation Ground and Hever Parish Field

We asked why they were under-used and some said they didn't know they could whilst others didn't know that the Four Elms playground existed. A typical comment

was "We didn't know we were allowed to use them or who to apply to – we would love to invite friends for a game of football or rounders if the land is available for use...." The short answer is that everyone is welcome to use these open spaces which are maintained by the Parish Council for public use. They are sometimes used by the schools during the week but they do not belong to them.

Efforts will be made to make the Hever field more welcoming by providing a couple of picnic tables and the feasibility of a mown running track and a small outdoor gym will be explored. Also, the Parish Council is going to install bike racks in key locations. These will be Olympic Legacy projects.

Young people

As a result of the Questionnaire responses plans are underway to update the playground at Four Elms. There was support for a new playground in Hever from 45% of respondents but very limited support for one in Mark Beech. Thirteen people asked for football goals and the Parish Council will pay for some goals which can be used on the Hever Parish Field; they will not be full size or permanently there. Basketball and dancing are also popular. Respondents showed an interest in play groups or other clubs for mothers and toddlers.

Footpaths

Plans are already afoot(!) to involve even more people in walking and footpath maintenance. Nearly half the walkers, 102 people, offered to walk, maintain and/or report problems on the footpaths! Linda Griffin (email: footpaths@hever.org), who lives in Hever, is the organiser and point of contact. We also hope to organise regular community walks which will have the dual purpose of giving walkers a chance to meet up (and enjoy a drink afterwards) and keeping a closer eye on the paths. Kent

County Council (www.kent.gov.uk) has overall responsibility for footpaths and its site has an online reporting tool; but it is also a good idea to report problems locally so that we can chase KCC up if need be.



Forty seven people commented that paths should be better maintained and this included various problems with stiles. The most mentioned was the part of the Eden Valley walk that passes Chippens Bank in Hever; this is the route that many tourists who visit the Castle take from the station. Kent County Council has agreed to do some work on making this path more navigable. Twenty one people would like to see better signage.

Equestrian

Thirty seven people ride and there was great interest in a parish riding group, which has now been formed. If you want to get involved please contact Jo Cockerill: equestrian@hever.org. Most of the riders would like to see more bridleways being developed and would pay for toll rides in the area.

Again, if anyone would like to start up any of these activities please get in touch via www.hever.org/parishplan or email sport@hever.org

5

Local business

Only 37 respondents work in the parish and about 50 employ local people. The majority of local business people were interested in setting up a local business network – which is being launched on Tuesday 31 January 2013 at 8pm in the Henry VIII - all are very welcome, whatever the size of your business. If you would like to join you can contact the group via a Google group on www.hever.org or email businessnetwork@hever.org

Pubs

The local pubs are well used. 72% of respondents use the Henry VIII in Hever (also voted the favorite pub) and The Greyhound in Hever and the Kentish Horse in Markbeeche are also well used. Sadly the Four Elms Inn,



the only pub in Four Elms, closed shortly after the Questionnaire was distributed. We asked people for their ideas for improvements. The largest vote was for computer classes, which are being organised, and the second largest for free wifi, which the Henry VIII has now introduced. There is detailed feedback about the pubs on www.hever.org/parishplan

Shops and businesses

Twenty four shops and businesses in the parish were identified, a surprise in a way given that at first sight this is a largely

residential area. We asked what would make people use them more and feedback included “better marketing” – we are inviting all these businesses to advertise on www.hever.org which will help, and there is scope to develop a directory of businesses. Some already advertise in the Link. There was much of support for a new shop selling interesting produce – including cappuccinos!

Hever Castle

The Castle www.hevercastle.co.uk sits at the heart of the parish. It has getting on for 300,000 visitors a year, offers bed and



breakfast in the Astor wing, hosts an annual Triathlon and the Hever Festival Theatre (www.heverfestival.co.uk). The great majority of residents love the castle as a “jewel in the crown” and would like to see more integration between the Castle and the parish. Only about 20% thought that the castle had a negative impact, mostly related to traffic and noise. Also, a number of Four Elms residents would like discounted season tickets and many would like a range of more flexible discounts in addition to the discounted annual season ticket.

Comments have been fed back and a response from Duncan Leslie, Chief Executive, is on www.hever.org/parish-plan; this includes an explanation that discounted tickets for locals are available to residents in parts of the Parish most affected by visitor traffic.

Primary schools

There are Primary Schools in both Hever and Four Elms. The fundamental difference between them is that Hever is a Voluntary Aided Church School and part of the Diocese of Rochester and Four Elms is a KCC controlled School. For some parents this difference is very influential when they are making their choice.

Only 5 per cent of respondents have children at their village’s school and of those 75 per cent are satisfied that their school meets the social needs of their children. 70 per cent felt that the communication and relationship between the school and the community is good. 50 per cent of respondents with young children would be interested in having a nursery school attached to their school. Others suggested that better information would be useful, via a website or parent participation.



Some parents commented about a lack of physical space available in the schools and happily both schools are expanding and have just completed building programmes. Others suggested better sports and non-academic facilities.

The sibling policy is a frustration for some: “The school’s sibling policy means that I can’t get my children into my village school

as it is full of children from Edenbridge and this pushes our children out". Four Elms' admissions policy is dictated by KCC and it prioritises siblings at all its schools. Hever is a Voluntary Aided School and is thus able to set its own admissions criteria which the Governors are discussing at the moment as they hope to be able to address this problem for September 2014.

38 people offered to volunteer to help in the schools. This is an area where support is much needed.

The Governors of both schools were grateful for the comments made and encourage you to select your village school as first choice increasing the number of local children who attend. They are continuing to work to improve the schools, see www.hever.kent.sch.uk and www.four-elms.kent.sch.uk for more information including the most recent Ofsted comments.

7

The environment

We asked how the look of the villages could be enhanced and the largest vote (44 people) was for the appearance of the crossroads in Four Elms to be improved. The building site has been tidied up in response to the feedback and Kent highways are installing further traffic calming measures to try to cut down on the number of accidents.

Other significant votes were for more flowers and for mowing the verges more often and cutting the hedges. This has been noted by the Parish Council which has asked the County Council to take action. Eight people wanted to reduce signage which is a factor to take into account when looking at the call for speed restrictions in section 10 below.

A significant number, 31 people, counselled against doing anything which changed the look of the villages.

Fifty people have offered to help litter pick, clear paths and garden communal areas which is fantastic. John Roundhill, a Parish Councillor, is leading a litter initiative. This includes pressurising the County Council for more litter picking activity on the highways and organising voluntary task groups as well. If you want to help please email environment@hever.org

Recycling

Fifty eight people would like to recycle tetrapak, polystyrene and plastic bags, food trays etc. There is no facility in Kent for recycling the first two. This is because the demand is relatively small and the cartons do not "die in vain". All black rubbish sacks containing non-recyclable waste go not to landfill but to an "Energy from waste" facility near Maidstone. A tonne of cartons produces the equivalent energy to ¼

tonne of fossil fuels. There are plans to recycle plastic food trays (known as hard mixed plastics) and this will be announced by SDC when the facility becomes available. The tip at the Dunkirk Depot, 2 Main Road, Sundridge TN14 6EP already recycles batteries, computers, green waste, and much more.

Rubbish

We asked if it would be a problem if rubbish was only collected once a fortnight; 81% said it would be. 48% said that fly tipping was a problem in their area. Both SDC and KCC take action to clear waste dumped on the public highway. Otherwise it will be up to the landowner. There are more details on www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/environment.

Aircraft noise

Hever village is situated to the east of Gatwick on a direct line extension of the runway and therefore suffers extreme noise from arriving aircraft lining up to land. Of the 135 Hever residents who answered the question 57 are troubled by the noise, 50 are troubled to some extent and 29 are not troubled adds up to 136!. The problem is slightly less severe in Mark Beech and only about 1/3 of Four Elms residents are troubled.

A typical comment was that the planes are "too many, too low, too loud" and night flights are a particular concern.

This feedback has gone to Gatwick and the Parish and County Councils, Sir John Stanley our MP and local pressure groups are all working to try to persuade Gatwick to spread the noise out over a wider area to make it fairer, or at least to timetable in some respite. They assure us that they are trying, but change has yet to happen. If you want to get involved contact GatCan www.gatcan.com or the Gatwick Anti-Noise Group davidbaron2@btinternet.com.

Deer

Fifty-nine residents thought that deer were a problem and 24 suggested a cull. Sadly there is no easy answer to what can be done as the deer mainly live on private land. The District Council does not have responsibility for their control.

Allotments

We asked if anyone would like an allotment in Four Elms and 27 said yes, with 11 offering to help with the organisation. As there is no Parish land available for allotments in Four Elms, the Parish Council are in the process of preparing a short document outlining the physical and legal requirements of allotments that can be given to landowners in Four Elms to find out if anyone would be willing to lease part of their land for use as allotments. Our research so far suggests that allotment rents do not cover their costs so the Parish may be asked to decide whether it is willing to subsidise the provision of allotments. If you are interested in getting involved please email parishplan@hever.org

The Thatched Cottage, Hever



8

Local government

The good news is that only 4.5% are unhappy with the services provided by Hever Parish Council and 35% are happy, but the bad news is that 61% do not know enough about what the Council does to say. The Council meetings are all open to the public and meeting dates and agendas are on the website www.hever.org. In response to these comments the council will also be holding weekend open surgeries several times a year.

We asked if people would be prepared to pay more precept to the PC in order to get more done; it is currently about £65 per household. The response was evenly divided between those who would and those who would not. Understandably some wanted to know what the money would be spent on before committing, the answer to the question is "projects like the ones identified in this plan and the PC would consult first before launching a big project". However, 37 people were prepared to pay double or more.

Ten people said that they would like to stand for election to the PC so there may be a contested election coming up soon!

9

Crime

Just over 40% have been affected by crime and happily most felt that the response from the police was satisfactory.

Nearly 100 people are in a Neighbourhood Watch scheme already and 65 more would like to join one. This will be organised, and if you are not in a scheme and would like to join one see www.hever.org/parishplan. These details have been passed to local coordinator Jane Burke: jtbnightingales@aol.com Tel: 01342 850570, who is happy to welcome yet more members. The police Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer is Jacqui Blake: jacqui.blake@kent.pnn.police.uk. You can also report a crime through www.hever.org which has police names and contact numbers on it.

View from Cow Lane, Markbeece



Travel

For nearly everyone in the Parish their main mode of transport is the car and for about 10% it is car and then train.

Bus

Only nine people use the bus regularly and around 85% never use it. The perception is that the service is poor, but those who use it think it is good!

Train

Nearly 60% of respondents use the train for commuting and more than 90% use it, mainly irregularly, for pleasure. The great majority thought that the service is good. Nearly 100 people travel from Hever, 60 from Sevenoaks, and Edenbridge Town and Oxted are third and fourth most used stations. Cowden is popular with Markbeeche residents. The local users group is the Edenbridge and District Rail Travellers Association. Membership is £4 per year and cheques can be sent to the Treasurer Mr RF Tatnall, 58 Church Street, Edenbridge, TN8 5BG.

Door to door transport schemes

Few of the respondents used schemes but ten have been sent information which they requested and 14 people offered to volunteer as a driver for Edenbridge Voluntary Transport Service (Tel: 01732 865353/ email admin@evts.org.uk). Three are now active volunteer drivers and Edenbridge Voluntary Transport Service are delighted with this result!

Roads Parking

There is concern in Four Elms and Hever about parking in the centre of the village, particularly at school pick up times and at weekends in the summer. The Parish Council has agreed to look into the problem and see if it can develop plans for better parking. There is also a parking problem at Parsons Croft off Uckfield Lane.

Cyclists

52% think that cyclists are not a problem but 48% do! The most popular suggestion was to try to promote single file cycling leaving gaps for cars to pull into.

Danger spots

The greatest number of comments, by far, were about Four Elms crossroads. Yet more safety measures are due to be installed in early 2013. A lot of drivers are also worried by the junction at How Green Lane/ Hever Road. The PC has asked KCC to consider installing a mirror at the junction. There are also concerns about safety at Markbeeche crossroads and measures will be investigated.

Speeding

Most respondents think that speeding is a problem and 75% would like to see speed restrictions introduced in Hever and Markbeeche. This has been communicated to Kent Highways (part of KCC) although unfortunately the budget for the introduction of such measures is very restricted at present. Alternative traffic calming measures will also be explored.

The state of the roads

Most people think that it is average but less than 10% think the state is good! Reports in the Questionnaire of roads needing repair have been fed back to Kent Highways. To report problems going forward contact the Parish Clerk clerk@hever.org

The churches

This is a response to the feedback from Reverend Jane Weeks, Rector of Hever, Four Elms and Markbeech.

“Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the questionnaire. The feedback has been good for our communities and especially for me as a new comer amongst you!

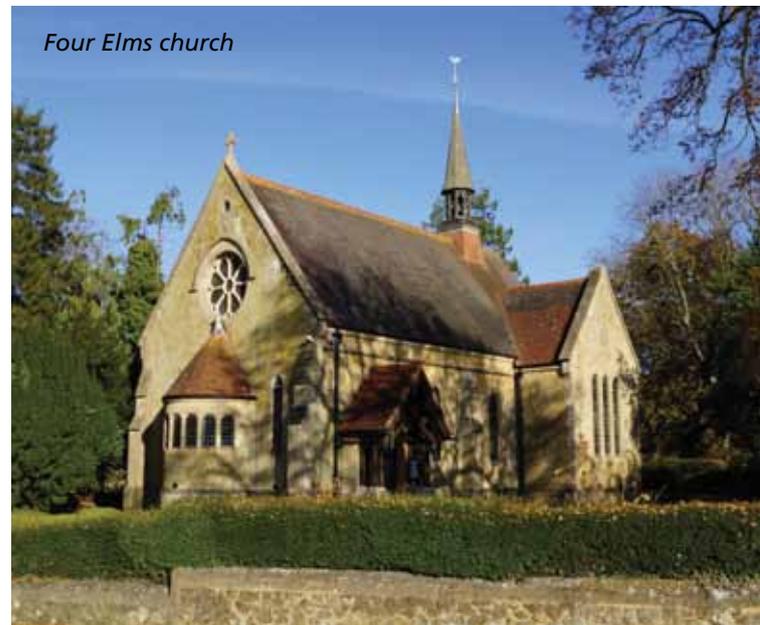
About 40% of you consider yourself to be a member of the church community of Hever, Four Elms and Markbeech; which is an amazingly high proportion. Yet, the main reasons for non-attendance at our churches, on Sundays, is that people are too busy. And, a staggering 20% go to church outside of our parish. There are 10% of you who keep away because you think your children are too young and too noisy and yet only 1% who would find them distracting in the services. Some of the changes that would encourage you to come to church have come to fruition. Services are on a regular pattern have been implemented and Café Church for those who wanted something geared to families.

With great thanks; many of you would like to become more involved in the church community with 60% offering support at the Village Fetes of Hever and Four Elms; 30% offering to deliver the Link magazine; 20% prepared to help on monthly church cleaning rota or with flowers in church. 70% of you who would like to donate financially towards the up keep of our historic churches; and quite a few would help raise money and join the Friend’s of St Peter’s in Hever

A third of you are asking for more social events and a good number of you are asking for stronger pastoral care and bereavement support. This will be implemented in the New

Year with the help of trained volunteers. And there is a call for the churches to be open for quiet reflection, most asking for this to happen on a weekday evening.

Over 70% of you subscribe to The Link but the website www.3spires.org.uk is little used; but that could be because we have problems with updating it and that is a priority for next year. Thank you for all the above generous offers of assistance; if we have not already contacted you then please contact me Rev’d Jane Weeks the Rector jane.weeks@diocese-rochester.org 01732 862249 or my administrator Carole Feakes benefice.admin@mynon.co.uk 01732 440417. Many Thanks!”



Four Elms church



Markbeech church

12

Planning and listing assets

We asked people to tell us which assets they would like to list as delivering a valuable service or public facility. Top of the list came the Four Elms Inn and Hever Parish Field with the Kentish Horse, Four Elms Fete field and the Four Elms Pond also putting in a strong showing.

Respondents made a range of suggestions about the planning process and showed a strong interest in being more involved. These comments have been fed back to the Parish Council planning committee. Planning meetings are open to the public and their dates are advertised on www.hever.org and on notice boards.



Hever church

13

Housing

Nearly 90% of respondents are owner occupiers. Four Elms has some Housing Association housing and the private rented sector is proportionately largest in Markbeech.

We asked how many family members had left the Parish in the last five years and whether this was due to lack of affordable housing:

Village	How many have left	How many left for lack of affordable housing?
Hever	27	5
Four Elms	17	3
Mark Beech	8	0

The respondents thought that these family members would return if they could find affordable accommodation, so the need is there in respect of about 20% of leavers. Other reasons for leaving were to attend university and for employment.

More than two thirds of Hever residents would support a small development of affordable housing if there was a proven need for people with a local connection. The proportion was the same in Four Elms – and Markbeech was almost unanimously in favour! The preferred tenure was “shared ownership” followed by “rental”.

Comments included:

- “we need more resident young families to balance the community, support the schools and churches. Therefore we need more affordable housing for locally employed people.”
- “would prefer to see housing scattered rather than in a group”
- “Those born and brought up should be helped to stay in the village”
- “there is affordable housing in Edenbridge”
- “no building on green fields”

A summary of the main action points

Issue	Action	Who by	When
Communications	Active website	Parish Council	Ongoing
	More notice boards	Parish Council	2013
	E-newsletter	Parish Council	Ongoing monthly
	Broadband campaign	Parish Council	Ongoing
Amenities	Explore community shop	shop@hever.org	Ongoing
	Other activities	Volunteers needed	
	Computer classes	Volunteer	2013
Sport/ leisure	Walking/ footpath activity	footpaths@hever.org	Ongoing
	Start more pilates/ keep fit	sport@hever.org	Ongoing
	Tennis activities	sport@hever.org	2013
	Running track/ outdoor gym on Hever Parish field	Parish Council	Feasibility being explored
	Football goals on Hever Parish field	sport@hever.org	2013
	Improve the playground at Four Elms	Parish Council	2013
	Build a playground at Hever	Parish Council	Feasibility being explored
	Start equestrian group	Equestrian@hever.org	Done
Local business	Start business network	businessnetwork@hever.org	Done
Environment	Cut verges more	KCC	2013
	Improve public areas etc	Volunteers needed	?
	Litter picking	environment@hever.org	Ongoing
	Open Gardens	Volunteers needed	?
	Enable allotments	Parish Council	Ongoing
Local government	Hold PC surgeries and more public meetings	Parish Council	Ongoing
	Regular PC news in the Link	Parish Council	Ongoing monthly
	Invite interested parishioners to stand for election	Parish Council	May 2013
Crime	Recruit to neighbourhood watch	Jane Burke	Done
Travel	Address parking issues in central Four Elms and Hever	Parish Council	Started
	Encourage cyclists to ride single file	Volunteers needed	
	Discuss speed restrictions with KCC	Parish Council	2013
	Take action on danger spots and repairs	Parish Council	2013
Housing	Explore the development of affordable housing for locals	Volunteers needed	Late 2013/14

The big issues

Almost inevitably the larger issues identified in the Questionnaire are the most intractable. We list them below with a few comments about what can be done, but these are long term problems...

Aircraft noise

This is a huge issue for some in the parish. It is blighting their enjoyment of their home. Some people deal with the noise by ignoring it but others can't. It is hard to feel that local campaigning is making much of an impression but we need to keep going and not give up. There is no quick solution.

Children

Our villages are full of young people and the myth that the Parish has an ageing population is untrue. However, local children don't go to their local school, due partly to choice and partly to lack of available spaces. There is a negative knock on effect for other village institutions like the churches – where are the young families, many of whom go to church outside the Parish? The school governors are aware of the issue and are seeking solutions.

Perceived socio-economic imbalance

A typical comment is: "this seems like a very wealthy area and I am afraid we could not "keep up." During the 1980s barn conversions and the sale of the Hever Estate by the Astors were factors leading to an influx of relatively wealthy new owner-occupiers. There is now support for the building of affordable homes for local people. Volunteers are needed to take this project forward.

Engaging Four Elms and Markbeeceh

The number of responses to the questionnaire from Four Elms and Markbeeceh were disappointing and it was notable that there were very few responses from households in rented accommodation. The question is how to achieve more cohesion and community involvement. The Parish Council is planning to hold regular surgeries in Four Elms as one step in the right direction.



Four Elms crossroads



The Old Post Office, Markbeeceh

Which village groups do you belong to?

Hever Bullen WI

Hever Residents Assoc

Men's and Women's Breakfasts

Hever Hort

Friends of St Peters

Four Elms short mat bowls club

Royal British Legion

PCC all 3 churches

Village hall Committees

Falconhurst Cricket club

Eden Valley Museum

Edenbridge Historical Soc

Bowern Book club

Edenbridge Strollers

Ladies coffee group

Four Elms darts team

Fete Committee

Hever Evensong choir

St Peters choir

Cabaret committee

Bell ringers

School friends

Stool ball club

Four Elms PTA

Drake Oil Syndicate

WKHA coffee mornings at FE village hall

West Kent Archaeology Soc

Clay pigeon shoot

Edenbridge fuchsia and pelagonium soc

Pilates, Parish Rooms

Dance club

Eden Valley artists

RNLI

Rail Users Association

Neighbourhood Watch



Parish Plan steering group:

Nicola Coldman

Julian Davies

Gill Ford

Bridget Harris

Christina Hodson

John Hodson

Tony Lawson

Louise Nightingale

Rob Ormonde

John Roundhill

Joanna Wade (Chair)

Kenton Ward

Jane Weeks

Designed by Paul Houlton

**Thanks to the Henry VIII, Hever
Castle and the other generous
donors of prizes for the draw.**

**And thanks to the many others who
have helped and supported in one
way or another - you know who
you are!**