

HOOK HEATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2025



**SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR
2024
&
SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL**

HOOK HEATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

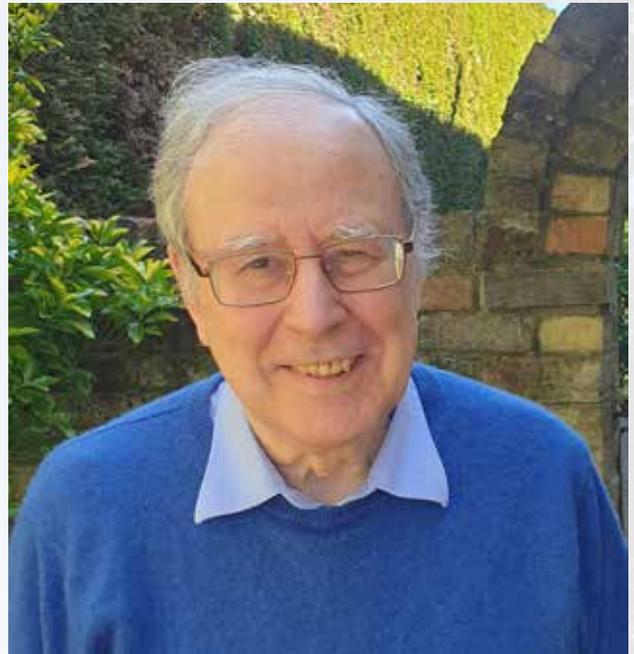
2025 NEWSLETTER

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the annual Newsletter. Looking back on 2024, it seems to have been a year of traffic diversions with the ongoing saga of the cladding on the Hilton not yet resolved. At least Mount Road has been resurfaced and we hope to see more progress on Holly Bank Road and Hook Hill Lane this year.

The new footbridge over the railway tracks by the Golf Club has been installed and will be opened later in April.

Our projects using Community Infrastructure funds to improve the surface of footpaths have been a success and our next project is planned to deal with the rest of footpath 104 between Pond Road and the golf course. It has been delayed by Surrey County Council having a backlog of work on footpaths and we need them to set the specification and get a quote.



Woking's financial problems have not been resolved but the Council has managed to secure sufficient support from the Government to keep operating with a reasonable increase in rates this year.

At the end of last year, the Government published an English devolution white paper, announcing proposals for local government reorganisation. Surrey local Councils and Surrey County Council have been hard at work on proposals for what this might look like for Surrey.

At present there is a majority of local councils in favour of three new unitary authorities but SCC have a preference for two. In simple terms the difference is a trade-off between savings (higher with two) and ease of connection between residents and council (better with three).

It's not clear what happens to Woking's debt if a new unitary authority is formed. Two of the other borough councils in Surrey also have significant debts.

From a planning perspective, the key questions are what happens to planning policies and site allocations. Woking Borough Council have reviewed their current Core Strategy and found that it complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at least until 2028. Under normal circumstances producing a new Core Strategy by 2028 would be a challenge but probably possible; if it is being done against a backdrop of reorganisation and job losses, it seems very unlikely that it could be ready on time.

A reminder that this Newsletter covers issues which we hope are of interest to residents of Hook Heath; it is sent to every household irrespective of whether you are a member of the Residents' Association. While some issues crop up again and again, and are kept under continuous review, we rely on residents to bring to our attention new local issues that they want us to consider.

If anyone is interested in joining the Committee then there are vacancies. The commitment would be attendance at an evening meeting 7-8 times a year. We are also looking for people to deliver HRRR leaflets - this would only be twice a year.

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Chairman: Dr Mike Cooke
Tel: 01483 727832

Vice Chairman: Vacant

Treasurer: Dr David Dare
Tel: 01483 764942

Secretary: Heather Mustard
Tel: 01483 729052

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Simon Ashall
Ron Brandman
Daniella Lighting

WEBMASTER

Dr Neil Cryer

JUDITH OAKLEY

We received the very sad news a few weeks ago that Judith Oakley, who was a member of the HHRA committee until earlier this year, had died on March 26 after a short illness.

Judith was an active and enthusiastic member of the committee for many years and made contributions to many of the key decisions and policies that we now see as a part of our mission, including protection of Hook Heath's character through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Judith loved the arcadian nature of the area and was an advocate of providing facilities such as benches for people to sit and enjoy the views in the sunshine.

Her work on the committee liaising with Woking Borough Council to get the trees planted along Hook Heath Avenue and Wych Hill was a further indication of how much she valued this side of the Association's activity and contributing to it.

She will be missed by her colleagues on the committee, as well as a very many other people in the Hook Heath community.

HOOK HILL LANE

Hook Hill Lane is an ancient road by Woking's standards and was never designed to service modern traffic. Its topography, location and need to cross the railway line all add to complications in maintaining it.

Hopefully it will be partly resurfaced this year and we are told that investigations are underway to find and address the cause of constant surface water seepage that flows down the hill, freezing in winter and pooling after rain.

Those investigations will look at two things in particular - the source of the water coming directly out onto the road near the top and also the drain outside Mimosa House.

Once these investigations are complete and the responsible parties have been established, we look forward to seeing the road being improved.

FACEBOOK GROUP

Membership of the Hook Heath Facebook page now stands at 979 members. With just over 700 properties in Hook Heath, this shows a very good take-up given that not everyone is on Facebook.

Facebook is constantly changing its rules about what appears in your feed and what does not - generally, the site will show people more of the kind of things they click on and that other people with similar profiles click on, and fewer of the things they do not.

So going onto the Facebook group and looking at what has been posted is the best way to ensure that you will see future local news, discussions and advance information.

The HHRA committee had various discussions around businesses advertising on the site and have chosen to keep it local - we don't restrict reputable local businesses advertising within reason from time to time but we do limit frequency and those outside Hook Heath.

As with all groups, the usual warnings apply around people trying to sell goods and services. If you see something that is too good to be true, or after enquiry something that doesn't feel quite right, please do exercise caution. The number of scams is always increasing and these people are smart - please do everything you can to avoid becoming a victim.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Forum and Residents' Association committees continue to examine all planning applications for compliance with the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan and Woking Core Strategy. It will get involved if asked to do so by a member or if the proposal is a clear breach of policies.

Neighbourhood Forums have a five-year life and this year our Forum will need to be 'redesignated' to continue in existence. The Forum committee has submitted the papers and is hoping the rest is a formality.

In 2004 there were 35 planning applications, 10 of which were rejected by planning officers. This is a record since the Association has been monitoring them. Either the quality of designs is getting worse or planning officers are being picky - or more likely, both.

In addition, one application was withdrawn and four are yet to be determined, meaning 20 were approved. By comparison there were 11 new applications in the first three months of 2025 so there are some signs that building activity is picking up.

The Conservative Government made changes to the NPPF in 2023. The new Labour Government was opposed to those changes and wanted different ones. A consequence is that another new NPPF was issued at the end of 2024. The NPPF is the document that sets out the framework for local plans.

It is given significant weight in planning decisions, meaning that it is one of the most important planning documents for applicants to consider when devising their schemes.

A lot of the requirements of the NPPF are usually captured in an easier to use format in local authority documents such as the Woking Core Strategy. Having reviewed its core strategy in 2023, Woking Borough Council have no plan to review the policies again till 2028.

A complication for WBC is that while new local authority plans and policies have to be consistent with the NPPF, regulations, policy and guidance for a new procedure for plan making have not yet been published.

With a planned reduction in planning restraints coupled with higher site allocation targets, the government were hoping that 1.5million new houses would be built in five years (already reduced to 1.3m by the Office for Budgetary Responsibility).

Aside from the question of planning constraints (real or imaginary) acting as a barrier to house building, little seems to have been done to tackle the other issues - are there sufficient builders and trades people left in the country post-Brexit, and do people have enough money to buy these new houses?

There is little doubt that changes to building regulations have made houses more expensive and tax increases are reducing people's disposable income.

It would seem that 1.3m is already over-optimistic.



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

As at 31st December 2024 the Hook Heath CIL pot stood at £77,646, an increase of £17,366 on the £60,280 CIL pot as at the end of 2023.

The CIL pot increase arose from developments at Hook Hill Farm on Hook Hill Lane, Firlands and Quevrue on Holly Bank Road and Little Shamba off Mile Path, and was reduced by the renovation costs of two footpaths and the correction of Woking Borough Council's figures.

The Little Shamba CIL is noteworthy, as it arose from the revocation of a previously given "self-build" exemption which apparently failed the "three-year" rule. The "three-year" rule requires occupation of the developed property for three years from the date of development.

The importance of this is that it suggests that Woking BC actually monitors "self-build" exemptions ensuring the capture of CIL in appropriate circumstances and thereby relieving in a small way WBC's debt.

There is hope for the receipt of additional

CIL of £18,369 during 2025, being the two remaining instalments from Hook Hill Farm and the final instalment from Quevrue, bringing the total net potential CIL available to £96,015. These figures do not include the prospect of "special circumstances" CIL of (say) £2,500 arising from the development at Westdeen on Mount Road.

Continued renovation of the footpath between Pond Road and the golf course is planned at a cost of around £10,000, leaving some £82,000 available for new projects. The HHRA Committee continues to explore further community projects on which to use the CIL funds. Readers' thoughts on the subject would be most welcome!



POND ROAD BOLLARDS

At the end of last year, Surrey County Council came forward with an idea that bollards should be placed close to the junction of Pond Road with Golf Club Road, just before the unmade connecting strip that joins the two parts of Pond Road.

The county council has decided to adopt that part of the highway but only as a footpath. That means that it will maintain it, including doing drainage works, but that driving rights do not exist over it. The council is concerned that maintenance on that section will be undermined by cars driving across.



So it has proposed to prevent use of that strip of path by cars through the use of bollards, placed near Chagfords. The county council did a consultation earlier this year seeking to find out the views of those living on both Pond Road and Golf Club Road about any change.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the survey found strong support for bollards among those living on Pond Road, particularly the part of the road at the other end to the golf club.

Residents on Golf Club Road felt strongly that bollards should not be put up - this was particularly so near to the junction although those living nearer to the Holly Bank Road junction were less concerned.

It is now for the Countryside Team at Surrey Council to make a decision taking into account the views of Hook Heath residents. The Association has no strong view and is content that views of residents affected have been sufficiently heard.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2024

Income and Expenditure	2024	2023
Income:		
Subscriptions Cheques and Cash	£380.00	£430.00
Bank Transfer	£2,240.00	£2,245.00
Donations	£75.00	£100.00
Interest on Reserve Account	£1,068.37	£878.49
Total Income	£3,763.37	£3,653.49
Expenditure:		
CPRE Subscription	£36.00	£36.00
Open Spaces Society	£45.00	£45.00
Photocopying and Printing	£280.00	£230.00
AGM Costs	£210.00	£100.00
Website Fees	£80.39	£68.39
Sign Maintenance	£220.00	£0.00
Total Expenditure	£871.39	T £479.39
Income less expenditure	£2,891.98	£3,174.10
Fund Balance at 1 January	£51,051.94	£47,877.84
Gross Assets at 31 December	£53,943.92	£51,051.94
Balance Sheet at 31 December		
Current account balance	£11,246.90	£9,411.07
Reserve account balance	£42,709.24	£41,640.87
Cash Assets	£53,956.14	£51,051.94
Creditors HHNF funds held by HHRA (1)	-£12.22	£0.00
Debtors	£0.00	£0.00
Fund Balance at 31 December	£53,943.92	£51,051.94

Note (1) HHNF funds held by HHRA following closure of HHNF bank account

Membership subscriptions for the year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 are now due.

Membership of the Hook Heath Residents' Association (HHRA) is open to all residents of Hook Heath. Residents who join the HHRA will automatically become members of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum (HHNF). Annual membership of the HHRA costs just £10 per year per household. In order that we may keep you fully informed of any important issues which arise over the coming membership year, please ensure that you provide the Treasurer with your current email address either by completing the membership renewal form below or by emailing treasurer@hhra.co.uk. We will only use your personal contact details for the purpose of informing you of matters relating to activities of the HHRA or the HHNF. We will never pass personal information to a third party without your permission.

Existing members may renew their membership in one of the following ways:

1) **By direct bank transfer** to the HHRA account, details of which are:

Account Name: Hook Heath Residents' Association

Sort Code: 30 - 99 - 80 Account Number: 00376381

Reference: This is your membership number - it is important to include this. If you are unsure of your membership number, please contact the Treasurer.

2) **By cheque** - please complete the form printed below and send to the Treasurer.

3) **By standing order** - you may set this up yourself using method (1) above or by completing the form below.

New members are always welcome - residents wishing to join the Association should complete the form below. They will automatically be enrolled in the Neighbourhood Forum.

**To: David Dare, Treasurer HHRA, Fair Ling, Hook Heath Road, Woking GU22 0DT
(Tel: 01483 764942, e-mail: treasurer@hhra.co.uk)**

**(a) I/We wish to renew my/our membership of / join the HHRA for the period
April 2025 to March 2026 and enclose the subscription of £10.00.
(Please make cheques payable to the Hook Heath Residents' Association)**

(b) I/We wish to pay by standing order. Please deliver a suitable form.

Name.....

Address.....

.....PostCode.....

Signature.....Tel No.....

E-mail Address.....

