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Sent: Monday, October 28, 2024 8:22 PM
To: Licensing (MBC) <LicensingMBC@maidstone.gov.uk>
Cc: 3093@kentpolice.uk
Subject: Hop Pole Inns

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I apologise for not making this submission online but I have been unable to log in.

Although I am a Parish Councillor, Churchwarden and authorised Lay Minister I am making this submission on a personal basis and not in either capacity.

I would like to see the licence for the Hop Pole Inn reinstated in view of the charitable and community work carried out there. I have been involved with Chatterbox, our local group for elderly or vulnerable members of our community for approximately 20 years. Chatterbox was formed by PCSO Ryan Jones and myself with the support of Kent Police, Nettlestead Parish Council and St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church. Once a month the members are provided with a two course carvery lunch with tea and coffee for a subsidised cost. They do not wish to use the village hall for this as they want to socialise with people at the pub like other people do and some like to purchase and enjoy an alcoholic drink whilst there. If any members or other local people are ill, just home from a stay in hospital or bereaved the Hop Pole will supply free meals. Going to the Hop Pole for meals helps combat loneliness, isolation and mental health problems with our older or more vulnerable villagers.

A table is available in the Hop Pole on Sunday lunchtimes so that people on their own who wish to have a roast dinner can sit with other people in the same situation and have company.

On Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons Warmspace is held with assistance from Maidstone Borough Council in the form of grants. This is open to anyone, food and non-alcoholic drinks are available free of charge and newspapers, magazines, jigsaw puzzles, books, games etc. are available. Again, this helps to combat loneliness, isolation and mental health problems. People who attend are in a warm environment and can save on heating and food expenses.

During the school holidays Summerspace has been held in conjunction with Warmspace. As there is no youth provision in the village it gives our younger people something to occupy them. Again, food and non-alcoholic drinks were available free of charge and this helped to prevent the stigma felt by parents of children who have free school meals having to ask for help. Books, magazines, toys, puzzles, craft equipment were available as well as pool, darts, table tennis, table football and air hockey. Special events were held for Easter, Halloween and Christmas when the youngsters could take part in craft activities. Before starting Summerspace we checked with the Council that this would not conflict with licensing rules and were told that we could go ahead as I would be their responsible adult on Summerspace days. I have had all the necessary safeguarding training and checks. Summerspace benefitted young and older people alike as the older people would speak with the youngsters and give them advice on dart playing and pool techniques etc. Whilst the youngsters were occupied it reduced their mobile phone usage which has to be beneficial.

Santa's sleigh visits the Hop Pole in the middle of December after calling in at the Railway pub and then delivering presents throughout the village. There is normally a good attendance for this at both pubs. Adults and children love to wait on the pub forecourt to see Santa and his helpers arrive on the illuminated sleigh.

On 11th November a Remembrance Service is held at the Hop Pole. This enables older or less able people to attend a Remembrance service without having to stand outside the Church at the War Memorial for a long period of time, sometimes in inclement weather. Food is available after the service and this provides an opportunity for socialising.

On the nearest Saturday to 25th June a memorial service is held to commemorate the life of Warrant Officer Blumer of the Royal Australian Air Force who died when Spitfire KM617 crashed in the village in June 1944. The event is normally attended by an Officer from the RAAF who represents the High Commissioner for Australia. This is then followed by lunch.

Other events hosted have been held to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Coronation of King Charles and a lunch held following a memorial service to commemorate the 500,000 European Sinti and Roma peoples who died during the Holocaust.

..... and I have been working to try to break down the tension in Nettlestead between the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population and non-travellers. Our local Church has become a member of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Friendly Churches network and hope to continue in this work in the hope that we can help to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation. The Hop Pole is large enough to cater for all members of our community and all should be able to use the pub whilst feeling welcome. Obviously it may not be possible to continue with the horse fairs.

There have also been fundraising events for Chatterbox, the Royal British Legion and a sick child from Maidstone.

I feel that the Hop Pole is an asset to the community and would like it to remain open for those of us who use it and have been made to feel welcome.

Jackie Bennett