

HOW HARNHAM HARVEST TABLE (HHT) WAS SET UP

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

PREAMBLE: *Harnham has 2 generic community groups, as well as an active Anglican Parish. Harnham Neighbourhood Association (HNA) was founded in 1974 with a view at that time of becoming a civil Parish Council. It never did, but has focussed mainly on Planning issues. Harnham Community Network (HCN) was formed in 2019 with a wider remit to draw together local organisations and individuals in a collective response to community needs. Harnham Parochial Church Council belonged to both, and actively supported the Network.*

Covid-19 forced a rethink, as it generated calls to community groups in South Wiltshire to pull together and register with Wiltshire Council. There was a recognised need to assist those shielding or self-isolating who needed assistance with shopping, prescriptions etc. The three organisations combined in their efforts to offer assistance.

Demand tailed off as summer beckoned. A zoom meeting with agencies and groups all over S. Wilts considered where next. The Deputy Chair of the HNA, Greg Condliffe, had an idea. Food parcels he had observed mainly contained processed food. He had in his garden a not too fruitful pear tree but by May 2020 it was loaded. The first thought was 'I cannot possibly eat all those, they will go to waste'. Could they go in food parcels, or be shared in other ways? Further reflection recognised that many people had used the lockdown to spend more time than usual tending their gardens in what had been a glorious spring and summer. Would they also have surplus produce to share?

A discussion with Marc Read, Wiltshire Council's Salisbury and South Wilts Community Engagement Manager, thought it a great idea to promote the sharing of surplus fresh produce, primarily to reduce food waste, but also to provide fresh produce for people not so able to access it themselves. Some research among food projects evoked a similar response and a steering group of six people from the three organisations was set up. Their deliberations resulted in HARNHAM HARVEST TABLE (HHT), and an application to Wiltshire Council's Salisbury Community Area Board secured a grant to support the initial set-up costs. The Harvest Table operated for ten weeks every Saturday from the end of July to the end of September. It was a huge success, also providing a venue in the open air for people to meet and socialise with friends in a way that Covid had been denying them, whilst operating under distancing and tracing rules. A survey on the last Saturday was 100% in favour of it continuing the next year, Covid or no Covid.

Set out in the following pages are some Guidelines which we hope will help those who have asked for guidance. The Appendix contains literature you may use or adapt to set up a HARVEST TABLE.

IT IS ABOUT MARKETING, AND BRAND NAME IS VERY IMPORTANT. This story may be more than just a flash in the pan: ANYTOWN Harvest Table could become EVERYTOWN Harvest Table.

The graphics are there for you to use.

USING THE GUIDE:

The first part provides essential guidelines. More detail of HHT data is in the appendix, including literature formats that you can use. The cartoon is copyright of Greg Condliffe but is permitted for use by other Harvest Table groups.

It is permitted to use the hugely successful primary leaflet and adapt it to your specific Harvest Table Group. For example: change strap header from Harnham to for example: ZOMMEGRUPE HARVEST TABLEZHT as opposed to HHT .

HOW WILTSHIRE COUNCIL'S SALISBURY AND SOUTH WILTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, Marc Read, viewed the project and its hidden benefit (from New Valley News. August 2020).

'The benefits of the project are social, economic and environmental and will not only benefit the recipients, who will be able to eat wonderful locally grown produce, but also for those sharing their food. People will gain huge personal and social rewards from being involved, making a difference to others, widening social circles and overcoming loneliness.'

GUIDELINE A: OFFICIAL SUPPORT.

It is not essential but: the local authority may be able to assist with some funding. HHT got a grant from Wiltshire Council. Your Council will have the necessary forms. Your local councillors' support at parish to unitary authority level is invaluable.

THE PRICE OF OFFICIAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTING VOLUNTEERS.

HHT experience was that no support would be available without Public Liability Insurance to protect the organisation and the authority against third party claims. It also provides protection for claims against your volunteers and there is the benefit it can cover the group for one year and all events. Shop around, we found a community group insurance with Zurich Insurance at a cost of £95. This formed part of our application for grant aid. Check if your sponsoring organisation (such as a church or community association) already has insurance, and whether it would cover this activity.

GUIDELINE B: CREDIBILITY

We found both local government and insurers and bankers would only deal with a group having a constitution or allied to one that did have.

A must is having named officers and, in the case of a bank, persons named as signatories. One must be the Treasurer and in our experience two others, of which the bank will normally require two to sign a cheque. We used a bank that provided this service for free. (One signatory and statements only on a monthly basis were unhelpful to our Treasurer as we were receiving donations on a weekly basis.)

GUIDELINE C: COVID-19

Hopefully we will soon be protected by vaccination but HHT had the complication of setting this up when many were isolated. So an initial step was to complete a detailed risk assessment for our weekly operation. We followed the Government guidelines to a T. Masking, distancing, disinfecting etc. Isolation is distressing and post-covid loneliness and vulnerability will remain. The remarks of Marc Read above will still apply.

GUIDELINE D: GROUP STRUCTURE

HHT set up a steering group of 6. It included a Wiltshire and a Parish councillor, the Parish Churchwarden, Charles Woodd, and others who were committed community activists. Zoom enabled debate and decisions to be made. It enabled other busy agencies to participate. A dedicated simple mobile phone and a specific email address provided important contact points. Linking into aid agencies, such as

those providing food parcels, care packages provided valuable additional support. Make sure they know you exist. From the steering group it is likely the leadership of the group will emerge. Emerge is far superior to impose.

GUIDELINE E: GETTING YOUR MESSAGE OUT

A professional looking leaflet with simple messaging stating what HHT was about, when it would happen and where, with communication details was key. Leaflets just get binned but if you can create something that makes people save it, you are on to a winner. The decision to put recipes on the rear of the leaflet did just that. A cartoon attracts attention and that was put on the front of the leaflet too (see appendix).

Distributing the leaflets through all the 3,500 doors in Harnham a week before we launched needed a big effort but was well worth it, as 70 people visited the Table on the first Saturday.

A leaflet can attract sponsorship. The printer of the leaflet, a local man, did the final artwork (that may be a skill within your group), added an advert and reduced his bill in support. Leaflet production and distribution are two roles you need.

We developed a contact with the local newspaper who published what HHT was doing every week. This was one person's role in the organisation.

We also put the message out on social media: Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor.com, and in the local Parish Magazine, and produced A4 versions of the leaflet as posters to place around the neighbourhood.

Early on in the planning, we circulated both the local Garden Society, and local Allotment Holders (through the City Council).

GUIDELINE F: SUPPLIERS AND SUPPLIES

Those who volunteered to help the group were themselves a source of produce and knew friends who would also help. The first Table was a real test.

We decided to receive supplies from 11 am to 1 pm, and then open for allcomers from 2 to 4 pm. We had an arrangement with an owner of a large house with an allotment of its own to collect supplies every Friday. A measure of success was that HHT opened with 23 different fruit and veg, whereas a commercial market stall might have 9. There were generally 5 types of herbs, flowers, root vegetables, tomatoes, courgettes and apples a plenty. And of course, some very fine pears! At the end of the season, an abundance of quinces put everyone's creativity to the test.

And a local artist did a still life of the produce for us to use in more publicity!

Not very much came from the local allotments. It was a back garden victory.

After a couple of weeks, experience suggested that our timing was too rigid and too extended, so we altered it. Producers were invited to bring their produce at 11 am, and consumers to come from 12 noon to 2 pm. In practice, we found some producers also took other produce away, and some consumers came early. Flexibility seemed the best policy, and is what we would recommend!

GUIDELINE G: OPERATING THE STALL

- i. A risk assessment goes with the insurance. See the appendix for HHT risk assessment, which took particular account of Covid-19 regulations.
- ii. Choosing a site that is central to the neighbourhood, and easy to access, is essential. Harnham Parish Hall has a green space adjacent to it, which offered the perfect outside space for our purpose.
- iii. Equipment needed is firstly two Gazebos: a reception and information gazebo, then a produce gazebo (2 x 8ft sq.), folding tables and chairs for casual use and volunteers. HHT borrowed the gazebos, and used tables and chairs from the Parish Hall.
- iv. We recruited volunteers from the three partner organisations. All had been recruited safely, and a rota was established with normally four on per session. We divided the day session into two, so that some people could come for half the time. Four people were needed at the beginning and end of the day to erect and dismantle the gazebos.
- v. Small items: brown paper bags, scissors, pens, disposable gloves, thick card for notices, string, antiseptic hand gel and wipes.
- vi. Tin/big glass jar for donations. Produce was shared freely; nobody was asked to pay. But HHT attracted rich and poor and the rich were generous and gave their help unreservedly. In debt when HHT started, before the grant payment was received, donations kept us afloat.
- vii. Short term loans were made by HHT members where necessary.
- viii. Do not offer cooked produce - food hygiene rules are very strict. Display a notice to say wash and/or cook produce from stall.
- ix. Make a feature of recipes on the admin stall and focus on different common or garden crops each week. People brought their own pet recipes to share with others, and others were really glad of the encouragement to try new types of produce, and new ways of cooking it.
- x. Anything left over went to the Community Fridge in another part of town. Our motto was WANT NOT, WASTE NOT. AND WE DID NOT.

- xi. Be sure to clear away at the end of the day. Appoint someone to supervise.

GUIDELINE H: COSTS

Beg and borrow what you can. The main costs for us were:

- i. A major cost is printing leaflets and posters – possibly £2-300, depending on the print run required.
- ii. Public Liability Insurance is a must, if your sponsoring organisation doesn't already have it (see above).
- iii. There may be a hire cost for the outside space you use.
- iv. There may be other incidental costs, including some of the equipment mentioned above, such as paper bags, gloves etc. A specific person, if not the Treasurer, needs to be responsible for the handling of money on the Table.

APPENDIX .

Documents and graphics of use.

See attached.

The original leaflet and recipes (3).

The cartoon. The pear photograph.

Of particular interest to suppliers may be the garden calendar showing when to plant seed and when it is ready.

Making a crocodile from a cucumber aroused great amusement. How to do it is there in the appendix.

Some recipes that can be available as single sheets and relating to common or garden produce. They appeared each and every week of the Table and were a very definite attraction displayed in the admin tent. This was the work of a man and wife team Tom and Sacha Blanchard. Will a cookbook appear?

The Risk assessment schedule of HHT.

Sussex University are currently carrying out research into community activities and how they were successful or otherwise during the Covid-19 crisis. HHT is part of the research.