

**MINUTES OF THE HEMPSTEAD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 27th May 2022 AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

- Attendees:** 6 members of the public
Parish Councillors Nick Turkentine (Chair), Diana Frost (Vice Chair), David Drane, Laura Saxel, Mark Welbourn and Alan Weedon
District Councillor George Smith
The Clerk, Rebecca Cox
- Apologies:** County Councillor Martin Foley, Sean McCarthy, and Eileen and Roger Shimmin

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Parish Council Chair, Nick Turkentine, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He gave thanks to the previous Chair, Sean McCarthy, who had held the position for many years, but had been taken ill last July and had been unable to attend Parish Council meetings since then. The Chair then thanked the Clerk, and his fellow parish councillors, making particular mention of Diana Frost in regard to her work refurbishing the village railings and Laura Saxel who had added "policing" to her remit in Sean's absence. Thanks were also made to the District and County Councillors, Ross Midgley for his governance review and Brian Kitchen as website administrator.

2 MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 28th May 2021

The Chair invited those present to read the minutes from the previous Annual Parish Meeting. The minutes had been previously signed as a correct record at the Parish Council meeting of 17th June 2021. There were no matters arising for discussion.

2 FINANCE

The draft accounts for the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 were reviewed by those present and the Clerk reported that the total balance at Year End in the Parish Council's accounts was £11,565.39. The Clerk noted that spending had once again increased in part due to increased maintenance costs, a £1000 donation to the Village Hall Management Committee and defibrillator training. It was noted that the precept for 2022/23 had been increased to £10,800, from £9250.

The Clerk noted that the recent governance review carried out by Ross Midgley had given the Parish Council a clean bill of health, and she added her thanks to him.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

3 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

The Chair gave a brief introduction on the Annual Report, which included mention of increased maintenance and tree work costs, and the structural damage to the village from recent excavations (County Broadband, road resurfacing and water main replacement), which the Parish Council is trying to ensure is remedied. He also noted that although the Parish Council will do its best to action/remedy issues arising within the Parish, it doesn't have as much influence as may be thought.

Copies of the Annual Report were made available to all those present, and the Chair briefly went through the report. The main points raised, and questions asked, were as follows:

Planning – The Parish Council continues to review and comment upon, where appropriate, all planning applications in the parish, noting that often no comments are given.

Highways – The Parish Council, through David Drane, has a good relationship with the Highways Rangers. There are still issues with ironworks on the High Street that still need to be raised, with Essex County Council (ECC) Highways being responsible. A member of the public asked why they had not yet been raised, and District Councillor Smith noted it is likely a cost issue.

Highways Panel – Once again an extension to the 40mph limit has been requested. A member of the public noted issues on Anso Road in regard to speeding and large vehicles.

Environment and Maintenance – The tree work on the Ring 'O Trees and willow was mentioned. It was noted that the broken railings at the bottom of Church Hill had just been repaired, but two other damaged areas still required repair.

Flooding – The Parish Council has continued to lobby ECC Highways to make required clearances to ease flooding. Additionally, a discretionary grant to allow the Parish Council to employ a private contractor to make clearances is being pursued. There was a discussion on responsibilities of ECC Highways and/or landowners regarding ditches in Hempstead. The Chair commented that he had received a detailed map from ECC Highways showing that they do not have responsibility in many areas of the village. The question of why ECC Highways may have not yet approached landowners directly in regard to ditches/culverts was raised by a member of the public. The possible use of community service individuals to clear ditches was raised.

Emergency Plan – The Chair noted that although there is no legal requirement for the Parish to have an emergency plan it is still a useful tool.

Neighbourhood Watch and Policing – Although Neighbourhood Watch can be joined by residents, it was questioned whether its relevance has now been superseded by newer technologies and social media.

Health and Well-being – The plan is available on the website and updated regularly.

Communications – The village website, Facebook page and email Newsletter continue to be used to communicate information to residents.

4 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

District Councillor Smith gave a brief report on the main issues of Uttlesford District Council (UDC):

Stansted Airport – The airport owner won its appeal to expand passenger numbers. The inspector decided that UDC had acted unfairly and awarded full costs to the airport, for which UDC have budgeted circa £3 million.

Local Plan – Delays have occurred, with the consultation period being initially pushed back to July, and now pushed back further (no date currently available). The delay is to allow a new, potentially suitable site to be assessed. The project timeline is very tight, so it is hoped the delays do not lead to further complication.

New Planning Director – A new director, Dean Hermitage, has been appointed to join UDC at the end of June, and new senior planning officers are to be recruited. UDC are making the changes following the planning department being put into special measures by the Government, due to failures in the planning process which allowed too many major planning applications to have decisions against them overturned on appeal (16.5% in 2018-20). The special measures mean that any planning application for a site with 10 or more houses can go straight to the inspectorate, bypassing UDC.

5 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Unfortunately, County Councillor Foley was unable to be in attendance.

6 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

The Chairman then opened the meeting for further questions and discussion.

The first point raised was regarding The Bluebell Inn, and the deterioration of the building. It was acknowledged by all present that the current situation was concerning, and that its reopening was much needed for the village. A brief discussion on issues surrounding the pub took place.

Tricia Ridgway gave a brief update on Community Speedwatch, which had not taken place since before the first Covid lockdown. There are now 5 volunteers/trained individuals ready to re-start. She has contacted the police requesting co-ordinated sessions, and hopes that the police will also come out and do their own separate speed watch sessions, but is aware that their resources are tight. As ever, more volunteers would be of great assistance!

The disrepair of the telephone kiosk and post box was raised. The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted BT regarding the refurbishment of the telephone box and was trying to contact the Post Office as well.

Nigel Smith thanked the Parish Council for all their work during the last year.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and once again thanked District and County Councillors, his fellow Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 9:50pm.