

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2016/7

List of Parish Councillors

Sean McCarthy	599558	Chairman, Police Liaison
John Sladen	586429	Village Hall rep, Flooding & Emergency Plan
David Drane	599397	Highways and Footpaths
Nicola McNeill	598074	Village Website
Sara Scott	599178	Neighbourhood Watch, Tree Warden and Affordable Housing
Mark Welbourn	598113	Traffic and Legal Issues
Alan Weedon	599366	Environment
Martyn Long	01440 730196	Clerk and Responsible Officer

Meetings: The Parish Council met eleven times this year. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings and any issues of concern can be raised during the meeting when the appropriate agenda item is discussed. Members of the public have attended on five occasions to discuss issues including the road difficulties caused by the footway work, Harvey Way litter and potential or actual planning issues.

The District Councillor, Simon Howell, has attended 1 meeting this year. He updated the Parish Council on progress and issues at Uttlesford District Council. County Councillor Simon Walsh has attended no meetings this year but has sent in regular reports on county issues and the pedestrian footway. Details of all expenditure, most pertinent correspondence and notes of discussions and decisions are recorded in the monthly minutes of the Parish Council which are available on the website and village notice board.

Planning: The Parish Council continues to review and comment upon, where appropriate, all planning applications. Additionally, the Council has made representations to the Planning Department querying the apparent lack of planning consent for change of usage at a certain property.

After the lengthy closure, it is good to see The Bluebell Inn is prospering as it celebrates its first year.

Pedestrian Footway project

The Footway Project was finally completed in March. The final stage took six weeks to complete and was not without its problems. These stemmed mainly from poor road signage which allowed far too much traffic to use the minor roads around the village. Nevertheless, we now have a footpath that creates a safe passage for all and which is well used by local residents.

The formal opening ceremony was held on the 8th April when, despite organising a date in the middle of the Easter holidays, more than forty residents attended. We cut the ribbon on the footpath and then retired to the Village Hall for refreshments. It was a lovely day and we were able to hold the main proceedings on the patio with our guest of honour Alistair Waters, previous Chairman of the Highways Panel.

Highways and Footpaths: Mr Drane continues to monitor the state of roads and footpaths but despite his robust and vigorous efforts to get repairs to roads, railing and footbridges this usually ends in a frustratingly lengthy wait for any successful conclusions.

In response to the submission to extend the 30mph limits, the County Council has proposed a 40mph limit to Boyton's Lane, but this has to be subject to a new submission for the 17/18 financial year, which the Parish Council has submitted. We have not had a formal response from the LHP in relation the declassification of Anso Road, nor for the 40 mph limit through Blagdens Hollow. The information from the County Council is ambiguous in this regard and, despite several requests, we have not received the LHP's formal response to those submissions in 2015.

Speeding traffic continues to be an issue through the village. Miss Ridgway attended a meeting with police and reports that they are trying to do their best to support Community Speed Watch groups. However, resources are very stretched with the number of police involved being cut to a third of former levels. The

number of village volunteers is now very low so new recruits who can spare just one or two hours per month are needed urgently. Contact Tricia Ridgway if you would like to help.

Environment and Maintenance: After last year's refurbishment of the pond, safety signs and a lifebelt have been installed. The bench has at last been returned.

After a tree survey of all the village areas for which the Parish Council is responsible, it became necessary to carry out tree work at Wellyards as there was a danger of damage to an adjacent property.

The council continues to work to enhance and protect the environment of the village and is grateful for those who support their efforts or report issues of concern. The Parish Council continues to support the grass cutting of the village centre, The Glebe and the Churchyard. Mr Weedon organised the 'Best Kept Village and Churchyard applications.

Flooding Following the discussion on flooding at the last annual meeting, regarding the Council's dissatisfaction expressed at the jetting and drainage inspection, Mr Sladen was finally able to arrange a meeting in August with Essex Highways. The group consisted of the area drainage engineer, a highways representative, CC Simon Walsh and Mr Sladen. All the issues were looked at on site and a list of objectives drawn up and agreed. Subsequently Mr Sladen was able to arrange for some of the work to be carried out during the January road closures in the village over a three-day period which proved very productive. There is still more work to be done and the next phase will include the clearance of road side ditches, many of which have become partially blocked with debris and are therefore not functioning as they should. The Highways Dept. are not responsible for road side ditches which are normally the responsibility of the adjacent landowners who we hope will cooperate with us to help resolve future flooding.

The Village Website has been updated and overhauled this year. A village Facebook page has been created which can be accessed via the website. The Facebook page allows villagers to post messages and share information and photos. Clubs and societies have been asked to update their details.

Finance: The internal audit was carried out by Mr John Cockman to whom the council is very grateful and the external audit successfully completed. Draft Accounts for the end of this financial year will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting. Finalised accounts will be on the noticeboard later in the year. Additionally, in line with the new transparency regulations these and other more detailed financial information will be on the website. A £909 grant was received from the National Association of Local Councils that enabled the purchase of a laptop and peripherals such as programs, printer etc. It also contributed to extra time for staff set up the changes

The precept that the Parish Council requested of the District Council was the same as the last few years: £8500. A grant of £50 was made to Essex Air Ambulance.

The council pays for the continued development and running of the website.

Additionally, it pays for the Speedwatch monitoring equipment to be calibrated annually and repaired when necessary and a contribution is made to the Radwinter Green Waste facility as many Hempstead Residents use it.

This year after many problems with our current bank it was decided to switch to Unity Trust Bank which specialises in public sector and charity banking. Difficulties in closing the existing graphically and frustratingly demonstrated why the change was necessary. Most banking can now be done on line more quickly and is subject to the same safeguards of dual authorisation of all payments.

Sean McCarthy
Chairman

Martyn Long
Clerk to the Council

April 2017

N.B. The Parish Annual Meeting is at 8pm in the Village Hall on Friday 19th May.