

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2017/8

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 Council met eleven times this year. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings and any issues of concern can be raised as the appropriate item is reached on the agenda. Several members of the public have attended to discuss issues including the Harvey Way hedge, flooding and potential or actual planning issues. The District Councillor, Simon Howell, has attended 4 meetings this year. He updates the Parish Council on progress and issues at Uttlesford District Council and supports the Council where he is able to. County Councillor Simon Walsh has attended no meetings this year but has sent in regular reports on county issues and also supports the parish where he can. 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.

Mr David Haylock. The Council was saddened to learn of the death of Mr David Haylock who until recently was a long-standing Parish Councillor. His unique local knowledge and experience of planning procedures were a very valuable asset to the Council. He was active in many aspects of village life and his in-depth knowledge of Hempstead will be sadly missed,

Planning: The Parish Council continues to review and comment upon, where appropriate, all planning applications in the parish. On many occasions no comments are passed onto Uttlesford. However, the Council is getting frustrated with the number of retrospective applications for developments. This seems to have increasingly become a route to subvert the normal practice. On no occasion has a retrospective application been refused or even been subject to very limiting conditions. If necessary, the Council also instigates or contributes to investigations by the Uttlesford Planning Enforcement Team.

Highways and Footpaths: Potholes continue to be repaired slightly more frequently with variable results. Mr Drane continues to monitor the state of roads and footpaths but due to tighter financial constraints repairs become more difficult to action. This is despite his robust and vigorous efforts, which usually end in a frustratingly lengthy wait for any successful conclusions.

The three Parish Council submissions to the Local Highways Panel (Anso Road, Bramley Hollow and Bramley Hollow to Boytons Lane) were rejected on the grounds of not meeting Essex Highways criteria. Essex Highways is willing to implement a 40 mph buffer zone from the current 30mph limit to Boytons Lane, and this is currently on the Local Highways Panel project list, although funding constraints may mean it is not implemented for several years. The poor condition of byway 8 (between Wincelow Hall Road and Boblow), which is largely impassable to walkers, cyclists and horses due to recreational 4x4 use, has been brought to the attention of Essex Highways and the LHP to ascertain whether temporary restrictions can be put in place over the winter months to restrict motorised access to agricultural vehicles, in the interests of maintaining access for walkers, cyclists and horses.

With police resources being stretched and concentrated in more populated areas of the county, the Community Speedwatch has played an important role in keeping the village safe. 1 – 2 sessions are usually run every week. However, the number of volunteers has diminished so new volunteers who can spare just one or two hours per month are needed. Contact Tricia Ridgway if you would like to help.

Environment and Maintenance: The only project this year has been the refurbishment of the fountain area near the pond on Church Hill. It is believed to date from the late 18th or early 19th century. Mick Simmonds cleaned up the surrounding paving blocks which were then repointed and sealed. Vegetation was cleared back and grass area

restored. This will make the regular maintenance easier. The Council is very pleased with result as it is now in pristine condition.

The Council has also been trying to get quotes for maintenance work on the village sign which is showing signs of wear at the base and top. Work is due to start on the base on June 4th.

The council continues to work to enhance and protect the environment of the village and is grateful for those who support the Clean-Up and Litter picking days. Issues such as grass cutting, flooding, fallen trees, water leaks and the condition of the village assets are monitored and appropriate action taken.

Mr Weedon organised the 'Best Kept Village' application. The village was again runner-up in its section.

The village Emergency Plan was updated in February by Mr Sladen who also continues to monitor the areas of the village prone to flooding. In November Essex Highways reported that the summer jetting and inspection of road drains throughout the village had revealed no issues or problems.

The Council were far from satisfied with the results of this report which they felt did not reflect the facts on the ground. In January at the request of the Parish Council Mr Sladen sent a report to Essex Highways highlighting, yet again, the site of blocked drains and associated issues experienced during and after the heavy rainfall in December and early January.

Eventually a meeting was held with Chris Stoneham (Highway Engineer) and County Councillor Simon Walsh resulting in the promise of further action within three weeks.

Finance: The internal audit is yet to be carried out this, but Ross Midgley has agreed to take on this task to whom the council is very grateful. Draft Accounts for the end of the year will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting. Detailed finalised accounts will be on the noticeboard and website later in the year.

The new Banking arrangements with Unity Trust bank have worked well.

The precept that the Parish Council requested of the District Council to cover next year's expenditure was increased by £250 to £8750. This is to cover increases in the grass cutting costs and an increase in the Clerk's hours from four per week to five. This reflects the ever-increasing email traffic and the need to update and review the statutory documentation that the council depends upon.

A grant of £50 was made to Essex Air Ambulance. The Council also agreed to give a donation of £2000 towards the Play Area scheme as plans progress. This will be finished by the time of the Annual meeting with the official opening on 20th May.

The council pays for the grass cutting in the village centre, The Glebe and the churchyard.

Additionally, it pays for the Speedwatch monitoring equipment to be calibrated annually and repaired when necessary. The Council will no longer make a contribution to the Radwinter Green Waste facility as there were no replies to the request for information about usage by Hempstead Residents.

Communications: During the course of the year amendments and updates have been made to the Village website to keep it up-to-date. The Neighbourhood Watch page has been made more user-friendly. Sara Scott would like to thank all those who have reported sightings of suspicious vehicles etc. Hopefully acting together, we are helping to keep crime levels down. The village entry on Wikipedia has been updated so that it now mentions our new play area and provides a link to our website.

Sean McCarthy
Chairman

Martyn Long
Clerk to the Council

May 2018

N.B. The Parish Annual Meeting is at 8pm in the Village Hall on Friday 1st June