

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2021/22

List of Parish Councillors

Sean McCarthy	01799 599558	Chair (in absentia)
Nick Turkentine	01799 599115	Vice Chair, Flooding, Emergency Plan
David Drane	01799 599397	Highways and Public Footpaths
Diana Frost	01799 599771	Communications and Planning
Mark Welbourn	01799 598113	Traffic and Legal Issues
Alan Weedon	01799 599366	Environment
Laura Saxel	01799 599763	N'bourhood Watch, Wellbeing, Tree Warden
Rebecca Cox	07468 413684	Clerk and Responsible Officer

Meetings:

The Council met twelve times over the year. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings and any issues of concern can be raised at the very start of the meeting. Three members of the public have attended meetings during the year.

- The Chair of the Parish Council, Sean McCarthy, has unfortunately suffered from ill health since June 2021, and has therefore been unable to attend any meetings since last year's Annual Parish Meeting. His presence has been much missed and the Council wish him well in his continued recovery.

In Sean's absence Parish Council members proposed and voted for Nick Turkentine to take on the role of Vice Chair. In addition, whilst Sean is absent Laura Saxel has taken on responsibility for Policing issues and Diana Frost has become the Parish Council representative on the Village Hall Management Committee.

- District Councillor George Smith was elected as District Councillor for The Sampfords' Ward in May 2021 and has attended 9 meetings. George has provided invaluable support and advice where possible throughout the year.
- County Councillor Martin Foley has attended 1 meeting, has sent in monthly reports on County issues and supports the parish where he can.
- Details of 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 noticeboard.

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. We have also engaged with online forums of Uttlesford District Council as they work towards a new Local Plan and a Development Management Forum.

Highways and Footpaths:

While the Parish Council was initially pleased to have the Hempstead High Street (B1054) resurfaced last Summer, the sub-standard work has been disappointing. The raising of 'metalworks' still remains undone and the surface is already looking 'unfit for purpose' in many places.

Seeing another section of the road dug up again for water mains replacement has also not been ideal. The enforced closure did however have its benefits - peace and quiet, the absence of litter and speeding vehicles, and nature is now starting to repair the damage to verges on the single-track roads. Unfortunately, the multiple road closures have led to roadside furniture being damaged, but it is hoped repairs by the County Council will be carried out within a timely manner.

Several footbridges have recently been replaced on the footpath network and we are fortunate enough to have a very good relationship with the Highway Rangers, who despite being a couple of chaps in a Transit van with the whole of Uttlesford to cover, manage to look after this Parish.

Highway's issues and problems continue to be reported and chased by David Drane. Residents are reminded that they may log any complaints and receive a 'tracking number' on the Essex County Council website.

Local Highways Panel:

Requests supported by both the District Councillor and County Councillor were submitted for the Local Highways Panel in November 2021, and included the extension of the 40mph limit to include Bramley Hollow; a 40mph limit towards Radwinter; and raised safety issues with HGV traffic volumes on Anso Road. The Council will continue to lobby Essex Highways and the Local Highway Panel to implement speed restrictions to make it safer for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders to use the public highway and access the amazing footpaths and bridleways in our Parish.

Environment and Maintenance:

A **tree survey** is expected to be carried out some time in 2022. In the meantime, general maintenance work has been carried out to the Ring O' Trees and an adjacent willow in the centre of the village. Planned work is expected to be carried out to a chestnut at the Village Hall in June 2022.

The **railings/chains** by the pond at the top of Church Hill have been refurbished during the year, by the hard work of Diana Frost. Through grant funding from Uttlesford District Council a new bench has been installed on the Glebe.

Essex Highways have recently renewed the section of tunnel under the bottom of Church Hill and renewed a brick support.

Stansted Airport has been quieter than usual with the reduction in flights during the Covid period, but with permission to increase passenger numbers going forward, we will continue to monitor performance.

Flooding:

Over the past 12 months Hempstead Parish Council has continued to try and resolve some of the flooding flash points in and around the village roads. As a Parish Council we are limited in the action we can take, other than to make regular representation to both the Highways Authority and Essex County Council, in an attempt to reduce road surface flooding by having ditches and culverts cleared.

We have also made, via the monthly Newsletter, numerous appeals to the owners of both ditches and culverts to keep these clear of debris, which might restrict the free flow of water, rather than to allow blockages, which then results in water spilling onto the Highway. Sadly, to date we have to acknowledge that none of our asks appear to have resulted in any further actions which might help prevent the flooding of our village roads. However, we will as a Parish Council continue to push for resolutions to these flooding hot spots.

Emergency Plan:

The Village Emergency Plan can be viewed via the Village website;

<http://www.hempstead-essex.org.uk/emergency%20plan.htm>

Printed copies are available on request via the Clerk to the Parish Council.

Neighbourhood Watch and Policing:

Information regarding fraud, property theft and rural crime has been circulated via the village newsletter over the course of the year. The Hempstead Neighbourhood Watch scheme can be joined via the Neighbourhood Watch website. It has been good to reaffirm our links to the local policing team with PCSO Nikki Smith joining a recent Parish Council meeting with potential for future attendance from either herself or one of her colleagues. The recent Community Safety Partnership event in March gave a valuable opportunity for residents to engage with the various teams involved. This is especially important as work continues to shape the Rural Crime Strategy 2022-2024 for Essex.

Health & Wellbeing:

After publication in 2021, the Health and Wellbeing plan for Hempstead has been reviewed and updated through the course of the year. A recent highlight was the opportunity to attend the online listening event to celebrate diversity across Uttlesford. This shone a light on both opportunities but also barriers to those with disability, with useful discussion as to overcome them.

Finance:

Ross Midgely has continued to act as our internal auditor. Accounts for the end of the year are available from the Clerk and further financial information will be on the website later in the year.

In January it was decided that the precept would be increased for the first time in three years, to £10,800, in part due to increased maintenance and tree work costs.

Communications:

Brian Kitchen, our technician, continues to provide a solid service in keeping the website running smoothly. The editorial content is managed by Diana Frost. The Home Page of the website keeps useful and latest information at the touch of a button and the whole site contains past and present information about Hempstead. 5% of all visitors to the website are from America.

A hard copy of the monthly Newsletter is always available on the Parish Council noticeboard and on the website. All dates for village events continue to be published in the Newsletter rather than on a separate Diary page.

Nick Turkentine
Vice Chair
April 2022

Rebecca Cox
Clerk to the Council