

List of Parish Councillors

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| Sean McCarthy | 599558 | Chairman Police Liaison |
| John Sladen | 586429 | Village Hall representative & Emergency Planning |
| David Drane | 599397 | Highways |
| Diana Frost | 599771 | Footpaths and Communications |
| Sara Scott | 599178 | Neighbourhood Watch |
| David Haylock | 599238 | Tree Warden and Planning |
| Alan Weedon | 599366 | Environment |

Clerk and Responsible Officer: Martyn Long 01440 730196

Election of Councillors: All existing councillors were re-elected unopposed at last May's election.

Meetings: The Parish Council meets monthly and residents are free to attend meetings and there is always an opportunity to raise issues of concern before the meeting proper starts.

The District Councillor, Simon Howell has attended eight out of ten meetings and sent one report since his election. He keeps the Parish council updated on progress and issues at Uttlesford. County Councillor, Simon Walsh has attended one meeting this year and sent in three reports on county issues and the pedestrian footway.

As reported in the minutes the issues of tourism and new housing development have both been discussed, particularly their impact on the infrastructure of the village.

Councillors have attended meetings on the new Local Development Framework, North Essex Forum, Parish Forums and responded to various consultations and surveys. They have also tried to keep abreast of the ever changing new legislation.

Pedestrian Footway through the village: It is a source of great frustration that this issue has not progressed from last year. Inevitably the election of new county councillors and reduction of budgets has meant that this has been a difficult year. The new councillor in charge of Highways, Tracey Chapman has proved elusive to contact. At last year's Annual Parish Meeting Councillor Simon Walsh promised to pursue this matter. In October he told the council that he had spoken to Councillor Chapman and reported that she is happy to visit when her diary permits. However she was very clear that funding is now extremely tight, and bluntly, it may be difficult to progress this scheme in the near future.

Councillor Howell reported in July that he had also contacted her and she had sent an officer to Hempstead but no more was heard.

In January Simon Walsh attended the council meeting and reported that Councillor Chapman had at last agreed to look into the matter of the pedestrian footway. Councillor Walsh had briefed the Head of Highways that no progress had been made since last year and the revised costing was still awaited.

The Chairman reminded Councillor Walsh that the council had been assured in the past that this scheme was top priority because of the risk to pedestrians. He strongly expressed the parish council's frustration and annoyance at the lack of progress or even any communication on the matter. Councillor Chapman had never replied in the nearly nine months that she had been in office to any communications or requests for a visit. He said it felt as if we were an

ignored backwater on the northern border of the county and easily forgotten. The purchase of the land had been agreed with landowners. The parish had volunteered to use some of its reserves to aid progress of a scheme that had been discussed for over 40 years. We now needed answers about when the revised costing would be available, the timetable for completion and when Cllr. Chapman intended to visit Hempstead.

The Chairman expressed the view of that the council and local inhabitants were no longer going to sit quietly and be ignored, but would take steps to ensure that our case would get the maximum publicity even if it meant contacting press and local media, staging demonstrations and protests.

Councillor Walsh accepted some of the blame for not arguing the case strongly enough but said that he had been left in no doubt as to the strong feelings that surround this topic.

In February Councillor Walsh sent a report. Cllr Chapman had advised him that she is unable to visit Hempstead, as the council had wished. She is still pursuing the update he requested a month ago, and repeated that week. She suggested this scheme might be worthy of putting before the new Local Highways Panel in the new financial year. The Parish Council strongly object to this suggestion as there would never be sufficient funds available to the Local Highways Panel. There was also a strong suspicion of Cllr. Chapman trying to pass the buck.

Councillor Howell had also voiced his scepticism.

The Parish Council has now decided to write to the Leader of the County Council, with a copy to all Councillors. Outlining our position and our strong objections to the treatment we have received.

Highways

Hedges overgrowing both highways and pavements have been a source of difficulty and it has been necessary to write to householders to ask them to deal with offending vegetation. This has met with varying success, some residents by their lack of action, clearly refusing to do so.

Potholes have been repaired and sections of the village roads have been resurfaced in no small measure due to Mr Drane's persistence in pursuing these matters.

Since meeting with the new Neighbourhood Police Inspector, there has been some progress with Community Speedwatch. The Police have made contact with the Coordinator, David Tupman and we await news of further progress.

The council took advantage of the county scheme to provide a supply of salt for use on Public Highways and Footpaths. The council was grateful to those few volunteers who did clear areas of snow.

Finance

The internal audit was carried out by Mr John Cockman who suggested some improvements and the external audit was successfully completed.

Banking arrangements have been reviewed and the number of accounts is being reduced. We are also reverting to telephone banking rather than using the internet which does not furnish the required level of security.

Further detailed accounts will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Policing The council has been concerned with the effect of the cuts to the Police service and the low visibility of police presence in the village. WPC Dawn Bamford attended one meeting. The council did get the opportunity to raise concerns with the new Neighbourhood Policing Team Inspector Mick Couldridge at a constructive meeting on March 13th.

Waste Collection: With the changing pattern of waste collection the collection of green waste skips was under threat. As many villagers used the Radwinter facility it was decided that we would contribute to the expenses to ensure that this continued.

Environment Village Greens: Negotiations to re-register the village green around the bus shelter continue and seem absurdly protracted for such a small area of self evident value to the community.

Maintenance: There have been no large scale projects this year but the Ring of Trees has been pollarded and the hedge to the side of the Village Hall has been cut back.

Public Rights of Way: This year there were stringent cutbacks in the level of grant. The total grant was £1433 compared to £5000 last year. It was only possible to cut 4800 metres instead of the 11300 metres achieved last year. Concentration was on the most used paths in the village. The Footpath Maps made available at The Bluebell have proved popular and have been enhanced after feedback from users.

Communications : The Newsletter is delivered to every household and is available on the website. This year for the first time it featured a colour front cover to highlight the events of the Gala Weekend. The website continues to be updated and improved.

Neighbourhood Watch : Sara Scott has been vigilant in sending emails with warnings of suspicious vehicles, plus guidance on topical theft item and security tips. These have been well received by their recipients.

Planning : The limited number of planning matters received by the council were all responded to on time.

Uttlesford Local Development Framework Consultation: This sought to obtain residents' views on where the additional 3000 houses, which central government had set as a target for the district, should be located. Councillors were concerned that the infrastructure of the district such as schools, roads will not support the increase in population. Locally the councillors' view was that the village did not have the infra resources to support large scale development but a modest amount of building may be acceptable. Mr Sladen expressed these views in the council's response.

Sean McCarthy
Chairman

Martyn Long
Clerk to the Council

May 2012