

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2012/3

List of Parish Councillors

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

Meetings: The Parish Council meets monthly. Residents are free to attend meetings and any issues of concern can be raised before the meeting starts.

The District Councillor, Simon Howell has attended six meetings this year. 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 five reports on county issues and the pedestrian footway.

Parish Councillors have attended meetings on the new Local Development Framework, North Essex Forum and Parish Forums. They also responded to various consultations and surveys and tried to keep abreast of new legislation. All expenditure, most pertinent correspondence and notes of discussions 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 monitor and comment where appropriate on all planning issues. The main concern this year has been the Anso Corner Farm site. This has been included on the list of possible locations for a Gypsy and Traveller Site and the subject of an application for two houses. Now it is the subject of a further application for change of use to office space in one of the commercial units. The latter is seen as a possible stepping stone for larger development of the site. The Parish Council considered all of these applications unsuitable, being outside the development area of the village. The text of the letter of opposition sent to Uttlesford with a full list of reasons for the location's unsuitability as a Traveller site was published in the newsletter. Many of the same arguments apply to the other applications. The council will continue to strenuously oppose these plans for the site.

Road Safety: After the strength of feeling about the pedestrian footway at the last meeting, another public meeting was held and a committee formed to press this and other road improvement issues forward.

Pedestrian Footway

Members of the Road Safety Committee have attended a number of meetings held by the Local Highways Panel. This committee assumed responsibility for the Footway at the beginning of April 2012. Members of the panel visited Hempstead and have subsequently shown strong support for the project. At an early meeting they voted an initial £50k to the project to enable the land transfer process to be undertaken. However, an initial and ridiculous estimate of £39k for legal fees stalled the process.

However, at the most recent meeting in April 2013 this figure has been reduced to an eminently more sensible £1000 and it is now hoped to complete this process by the end of May. The LHP also reported that they were close to

finalising costs for moving utility services and they were expecting to start the construction of the footway later this year with an expected completion before the end of the current financial year.

Success at last – MAYBE !!!

Community Speedwatch Another result of Road Safety Committee meetings was that a Group was formed to train and carry out Community Speedwatch activities. This has been taken forward and is now under the co-ordination of Tricia Ridgway. The volunteers have carried out numerous speed checks at different times of day. The Parish Council has supported this activity by using the new home bonus from Uttlesford to purchase a radar speed gun so that the group is independent in being able to choose the times of their activities. They are also in touch with other local groups to attempt to co-ordinate activities. Recently permission has been attained to use other locations so the activities can be varied and a larger proportion of the village covered. The council is very grateful for the continuing efforts of all the volunteers. However new volunteers would be most welcome to maintain this positive momentum.

The Parish Council also responded to the government consultation on the raising of speed limits for commercial vehicles on rural roads and expressed concern to Uttlesford about the dustcarts regularly passing through the village.

Highways

Some potholes have been repaired, in no small measure due to Mr Drane's persistence in pursuing these matters. However the poor winter weather has taken its toll on the roads and the issue will be continued to be pursued.

Finance

The internal audit was carried out by Mr John Cockman to whom the council is grateful and the external audit was successfully completed. Banking arrangements have been reviewed and the number of accounts has been further reduced to three. The clerk's gratuity, which is now no longer seen as in line with current practice, was discontinued and replaced by an increase in salary.

Further detailed accounts for the end of the year will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Green Waste Collection: As many villagers use the Radwinter facility it was decided that we would continue to contribute to the expenses, despite an increase in cost, to ensure that this was maintained for Hempstead residents.

Maintenance: There have been no large scale projects this year but the hedge to the side of the Village Hall has been cut back. The Parish Council is investigating some tree work to enhance the view of the church from the village.

Public Rights of Way

After a protracted negotiation at the start of last year and reluctance on the part of ECC to follow their procedures of the previous year, we did secure the finances we required to maintain the paths in the heart of the village. Financial restrictions meant that paths on the outskirts were not cut. Our faithful contractor, used in recent years on the paths where we have control, did an excellent job again and the Council upheld their part of the bargain when the weather permitted. Arrangements for 2013 have yet to be agreed but we have requested at least the same control as last year.

Communications: The monthly Newsletter is delivered to every household and is available on the website and noticeboard. The website continues to be regularly updated and improved.

Sean McCarthy
Chairman

Martyn Long
Clerk to the Council

May 2013