

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2025/26

List of Parish Councillors

Nick Turkentine	Chair and Policing
Paul Frainer	Highways & Footpaths and Flooding
Diana Frost	Environment
Caroline Hughes	Health and Wellbeing
James Nicholson	Planning
Emma Tarry	Vice-chair and Communications
Mark Welbourn	Traffic and Legal Matters
Rebecca Cox	Clerk and Responsible Officer 07468 413684 parish.clerk@hempstead-essex.org.uk

The Council

The Parish Council spent most of the year with two councillor vacancies. Following advertising of the vacancies and discussions with residents, the Council welcomed Emma Tarry and Caroline Hughes as councillors following their co-option at the meeting held on 12th February 2026.

Meetings

The Council met twelve times over the year, with the September meeting being an Extraordinary Meeting required to discuss just one planning application. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings, and any issues of concern can be raised at the very start of the meeting. Several members of the public had attended a meeting during the year.

- District Councillor Mike Tayler has attended 6 meetings and has sent monthly updates on Uttlesford District Council matters.
- County Councillor Martin Foley has attended 2 meetings, has sent in monthly reports on County issues and supports the parish where he can, most notably with Highways issues.
- 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.

Finance

Ross Midgley has continued to act as internal auditor, for which the Parish Council are very grateful. 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 December 2025 it was decided that the precept for 2026/27 would be increased to £14,400, due to increased costs and to cover the purchase of a new Speed Indicator Device. The Parish Council have compared Council Tax costs for Hempstead residents to those of other Uttlesford parishes and have found that this parish still sits at the mid-point.

Planning

Over the last year, Hempstead Parish Council has received notifications of a range of planning applications, including new builds / conversions, minor alterations and development at Stansted Airport. The council has commented on most, supported some and occasionally objected, with responses focused on the need to preserve the rural character of the area, the street / linear nature of the village and to encourage compliance with dark skies standards. The new Uttlesford Local Plan (2021-2041) was adopted on 25 March 2026, superseding the previous 2005 Local Plan, following a long consultation period in which Hempstead Parish Council actively participated.

Highways and Footpaths

The Parish Council has continued to receive support from both District and County Councillors, for highways issues. Despite this support, and continued lobbying to Essex Highways, potholes and the overall maintenance of the village roads continue to be a major issue for the Parish Council. Any issues highlighted by parishioners on the Essex Highways online reporting tool would greatly assist.

We understand that all ECC funding to the Local Highways Panels has been withdrawn, so no LHP schemes (such as our attempts for extended 40mph speed limits on the approaches to the village) will be progressed this financial year. While resurfacing of the High Street and Hill Road had appeared in the Essex Highways' capital plan for this financial year, this has now disappeared, without any explanation being forthcoming.

The footpaths were cut as usual by an Essex County Council contractor last summer.

Environment and Maintenance

The 100th anniversary of the dedication of the War Memorial on July 4th, 2025, had created a large amount of clearance and re-decoration of key features in the heart of the village. The raising of the crowns on the Ring o' Trees was of particular note and improved the entire vision of the village centre coming down Church Hill and displayed the Ring itself to much better advantage. As a result of all the work achieved, we have now increased the portfolio awarded to our landscape contractor, Outdoor Jack, and we believe the village is looking much improved for more regular care and attention.

The annual litter pick has already taken place this year, with a large number of sacks, particularly of broken car parts, requiring collection by UDC who provide the equipment for the event.

Flooding

There have been fewer weather-related flooding incidents in the village over the past year, which may in part be due to work carried out by Essex Highways following their inspections the previous year on Anso Road. However, excess surface water continues to cause road surface damage in times of heavier rainfall. Hempstead was included on the 2025/26 surface water alleviation scheme investigation for Anso Road, where sites are scored and then work programmed on the basis of the score and resources available, but no work was programmed for the village over the past year. The Parish Council thanks residents for their ongoing assistance with surface drain clearance.

Policing and Speedwatch

Information regarding fraud, property theft and rural crime has been circulated via the village newsletter over the course of the year. Unfortunately, due to the lack of volunteers the Speedwatch activities have not been able to take place.

Health & Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing plan is available on the village website. This has been reviewed and is still current, and future updates will be made as required.

Buses

Following a review and consultation by Essex County Council (ECC) on bus routes there was a proposal to withdraw the 320/321 routes that service Hempstead. As part of a follow-up consultation, Hempstead Parish Council, along with other parishes affected and County Councillor Martin Foley, wrote to the Essex Integrated Passenger Transport Unit and ECC urging that the decision be overturned. The Parish Council thanks Hempstead residents who also took the time to respond to both consultations.

It was confirmed at the beginning of April that bus services 320/321 had been saved and would run until at least July 2028. The Parish Council will continue to work closely with local bus-leads on the future of travel infrastructure within Uttlesford/Essex.

Communications

The village has a new WhatsApp group to accompany the existing Newsletter distributed by email, the village Facebook and the hard copy publication of the Newsletter on Noticeboards. They are all independent of the Parish Council but are used to promote Parish Council events. The council is solely responsible for the village website, www.hempstead-essex.org.uk and this will be reviewed and refreshed in 2026.

Events

The Parish Council marked the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the War Memorial with a gathering and story-telling hosted by the Chair, Nick Turkentine and including the Lord-Lieutenant for Essex, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, and Major Cadogan from the 35 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers. Ross Midgley told the backstory of two of the names on the Memorial, with Ian Coote playing the extended version of Reveille on his bugle and flowers were laid. About 60 villagers including the local Cub pack also attended.

Afterwards tea and refreshments were served in the hall decorated with bunting, and where a unique exhibition from a private collection of war memorabilia was kindly loaned and spoken about by Tricia Ridgway, gathering many compliments from all who viewed it. It was a memorable day for Hempstead.

Nick Turkentine
Chair

Rebecca Cox
Clerk to the Council

May 2026