

Hempstead Parish Council, Annual Report 2022/23

List of Parish Councillors

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|------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Nick Turkentine | 07785 950490 | Chair, Flooding and Emergency Plan |
| David Drane | 01799 599397 | Highways and Public Footpaths |
| Diana Frost | 01799 599771 | Communications and Planning |
| Mark Welbourn | 01799 598113 | Traffic and Legal Matters |
| James Nicholson | | |
| Rebecca Cox | 07468 413684 | Clerk and Responsible Officer |

The Council:

During the year the Parish Council said goodbye to 3 much valued Councillors –

- Laura Saxel stepped down having been a member since 2019, with responsibility for Health and Well-being, Neighbourhood Watch and acting as Tree Warden;
- Sean McCarthy resigned due to ill health after almost 30 years as Chair; and
- Alan Weedon sadly passed away at the end of November after many decades of involvement not only in the Parish Council but the wider Hempstead community.

Following the vacancies arising the Council co-opted long-standing resident of Hempstead James Nicholson onboard in November.

Meetings:

The Council met ten times over the year, which included one extraordinary meeting required to discuss planning applications. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings and any issues of concern can be raised at the very start of the meeting. Eight members of the public attended meetings during the year.

- District Councillor George Smith 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, 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.

Planning:

The council have received a high number of applications in 2023 and commented where required. We have attended UDC's online Parish Forums on Planning matters, and are aware that they currently remain in special measures and with limited resources for the high workload they are required to review.

The Land at the Triangle is for sale and whilst the Council does not have funding to purchase it, investigations into whether it can be registered as a Village Green are being made.

Highways and Footpaths:

Another year of 'continuous struggle' to get any repairs to the road surface or roadside barriers, signage and hedges. Hempstead experiences a high level of traffic and larger vehicles continue to cause problems – flooding onto the carriageway exacerbates these issues. The raising of all metalworks remains undone and the road surface is looking 'unfit for purpose' in many places throughout the village.

Several footbridges have recently been replaced on the footpath network, with thanks to a volunteer group, but the Council are no longer fortunate enough to be able to call on the Essex Highway Rangers, with whom a very good relationship was had, as they have been disbanded by Essex County Council. Hopefully they may realise the error of their ways and re-instate this vital team.

Highway and rights of way issues 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 ECC website.

Local Highways Panel:

The Parish Council continues to pursue extended 40 mph speed limits on the approaches to the village. Unfortunately, there is no indication that the Local Highways Panel will implement any further limits. With the extended roadworks and closures on the A1307 in the next 12 months, additional traffic can be expected through the village, and increasing damage to verges with a higher volume of HGV traffic. The Parish Council will be communicating with Cambridge Highways and large HGV operators in Haverhill to encourage HGV operators to follow the official diversion rather than running through surrounding villages. However, as the official diversion is via Bury St Edmunds there are concerns that significant traffic heading towards the M11 from Haverhill will route through the village.

Environment and Maintenance:

A horse chestnut tree that was encroaching dangerously on electricity cables next to the village hall was felled in June.

The “water fountain” at the bottom of Church Hill was repointed, with funding in part provided by Essex Heritage Trust and a UDC Ward grant. The very leaky tap was then refurbished by a village volunteer, who also improved the drainage system to the water trough, to ensure water did not spill onto the newly pointed area surrounding the water fountain.

The repainting work on railings/chains around the village continued, with Diana Frost working on the water trough and railings around the water fountain in July. Villagers then came together in early October for a “clean-up” day, where greenery was cleared from around the Glebe, and the area at the bottom of Church Hill around the pond and water fountain.

The telephone box, one of the last working ones in the area, was repainted and refurbished after the Council made requests to BT.

Flooding:

The Parish Council continues to work with Essex Highways to ensure that wherever possible, both Highways and those owners of ditches and culverts take all reasonable action to keep them clear, and in doing so reduce the risk of rainwater spilling onto the Highway and causing unnecessary flooding of the roads in and around the village.

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.

Policing and Speedwatch:

Information regarding fraud, property theft and rural crime has been circulated via the village newsletter over the course of the year.

Health & Wellbeing:

The Health and Wellbeing plan is available on the village website, and will be reviewed and updated after the elections in May.

Finance:

Ross Midgley 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 to £11,600.

Communications:

The village email group continues to attract all newcomers and has a circulation of approx. 170 addresses. Facebook is also used with access to 100 readers, some of whom also receive the mails.

With the demise of many of the village's Clubs and Societies, the website's main functions have increasingly become legal document notification, as a history archive and for reference. It is 21 years since its creation and the Council feel it is time to modernise and simplify it. We are currently in liaison about using a standard format, which we will be able to manage ourselves.

Nick Turkentine

Chair

April 2023

Rebecca Cox

Clerk to the Council