



Pirton Parish Council

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Annual Report 2021 - 2022



Pirton Parish Council Annual Report gives a review of the activities of the Council and the financial report for the year ending 31st March 2022.

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www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk

Chairman's Report

It has been another busy year for Councillors in Pirton.

The new Pavilion project has been progressed. The Pavilion Development Group worked initially with Charlotte Fausset, Architect, to bring the project to life and up to the second phase when a more detailed plan was required. We thank Charlotte for her enthusiasm and expertise to get us through the initial phase of this exciting project.

The project has now moved on to the more detailed plans required for planning submission. Simon Knight from Simon Knight Architects was the successful bidder in the tender process. He has produced a set of plans that built on Charlotte's initial design. These have been publicised on the Village website and at a publicity event a few weeks ago. It was very exciting seeing Simon's design come to life with a model, information boards and a 'walk through' on TV.

Residents who came to the event were very positive and made suggestions for changes and improvements. We now need to raise funds! There is funding from S106 monies and the working group has had very positive meetings with the Football Foundation for further funding. Other funding opportunities are being sought, but we will be having fundraising events to supplement these. Thank you to the New Pavilion Working Group, and especially to Cllr Maple who has led the project with so much enthusiasm.

It is lovely to welcome members of the Public to Council meetings. Various subjects have been raised, including road safety, parking in the village, dog mess, bats in an area earmarked for development and overgrown pathways. The Parish Council cannot always provide a solution but we will always try. We enjoy seeing people at the meetings who bring subjects to the attention of Councillors.

Councillors worked in conjunction with village residents on the Communications Working Group throughout the year. The new village website is the result and it is well worth a visit (www.pirton.org). Thanks must go to all involved, as it is fast becoming a popular resource.

Many trees have been planted in Pirton, part of the Queen's green canopy for the Diamond Jubilee. We are committed to maintain the biodiversity of the village and have been disappointed to see the destruction of hedgerows in various places. The Parish Council has entered into a memorandum of understanding with Wild about Pirton to help maintain the fragile balance. The Parish Council always considers the environmental impact of any planning application.

Planning is probably the area that gives the Parish Council the most work. The planning committee considers every application submitted to NHDC. A reply is submitted for every case. The reply may just be 'no objection' but some take an enormous amount of work to compile. The Planning Committee is extremely hard working and again I must thank them, especially Cllrs Burleigh and Rowe.

In August we welcomed Cllr Steve Bright to the Parish Council. He has proved to be a hardworking and knowledgeable Councillor. I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their tireless work and support this year. As you can see from my report, there have been many challenges, and some achievements.

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I would also like to thank the Clerk, Ted Roberts, for all his hard work and sound counsel this year. Other people who deserve thanks are Tony Smart, street cleaner, who does a fabulous job, and Steve Kitchener, who is our tree warden and groundsman.

I look forward to another year as Chairman of the Parish Council and look forward to the challenges that it will bring

Jill Rogers

Parish Council Round-up

Annual Pirton Parish Council Report additional information April 2021 to March 2022

Recreation Ground Development

The Council set up a Working Group to advise it on the best way to utilize allocated Section 106 funds that were paid by housing developers, Following an upgrade to the playground in 2021, attention has focused on the proposal to replace the Pavilion with a new building. A Development Project Plan was produced by the Working Group and this was accepted by the Parish Council in November 2021. Pre-application planning advice was sought and a topographical survey was conducted. A Quantity Surveyor produced an estimate of the cost based on the concept design. Following a competitive tender, a contract was awarded to produce a design for planning permission submission. It is expected that a submission will be made around the end of May 2022. The design is intended to be energy efficient, using high levels of wall insulation to reduce heat loss. If this is successful, and the funding can be raised, it is planned that the building would be constructed in 2023/24, The current view on funding is that approximately 25% would be from Section 106, 25% from the Football Foundation, 15-25% from other grants and fundraising, 25-35% from a loan. It is intended that this important village asset will be well used by the community, not just for sports.

MUGA

The surface was repainted at no cost following a faster than expected deterioration of the paint that was applied after resurfacing, A defibrillator has been installed, with thanks to the PSSC for providing it to the tennis club at a very low price after the Football Foundation provided a new one for the PSSC. A grant from the Parish Council helped to pay for the installation at the MUGA.

The Parish Council has also replaced the broken backboard for the basketball board.

Assets of Community Value

The registration of Assets of Community Value with North Herts District Council lasts for 5 years before they drop off the register. In 2020 renewals were accepted for the village shop, the village hall and the two public houses. This year, the process is ongoing for Pirton Nature Reserve, the plot of land next to Vicarage.

Communications Working Group

In September 2021, the Communications Working Group (CWG) successfully launched Pirton.org, Pirton's new village website. Funding was kindly donated by Pirton's Pumpkin Club, and the website was designed by Matt Porter, under the direction of the CWG.

We have been active in continuing to post more information on the Parish Council Facebook page along with beginning to use the Pirton Parish Council website more, disseminating information, particularly focussing on the new Recreation Ground Pavilion, enabling local residents to have another means of engaging with the PC.

Face to face contact was successful, both at the Summer Fair and events to promote the new pavilion, and the Community Action Day provided yet another opportunity to engage and educate, particularly newer members of the community, as to what the Parish Council does.

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We will again be at this year's Summer Fair and are already looking at content for our Autumn newsletter along with an Autumn Community Action Day. If you feel that there is another effective method of engaging with residents, and communications is a strength of yours, we would love to hear your thoughts and experiences, and join our communications working group to help us with our work.

Look out for our stall at the Summer Fair, and come and have a chat with us, or contact us via Facebook, the PPC website or via parishclerk@pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk

A Report from our Member of Parliament

This year our community has begun to emerge from the Covid pandemic, thanks in no small part to the fantastic efforts of local people to get vaccinated. Covid has been a period in which our community has come together and it has been wonderful to hear stories of so many local people who have helped their friends and neighbours.

As we emerge from the pandemic, I have resumed my busy schedule of in-person events, including pub surgeries, Town Centre surgeries, door knocking and more. I have enjoyed speaking to Pirton residents about the issues that matter to them.

I have taken action on behalf of Pirton residents in a number of different ways this year. After speaking to residents on the new CALA Homes development, I raised concerns about the unfinished road surface with the Council and the developer. I supported local campaigners who wanted to create a nature reserve on meadows in the village. I have also spoken with the senior leadership at both the Primary School and the Pre-School about their needs this year.

Following resident concerns about the potential for Luton Airport expansion, I called in the plans approved by Luton Borough Council in December for expansion to 19 million passengers. These will now be decided by the Secretary of State. I continue to work to oppose any expansion and have been making representations on residents' behalf against the plans to expand to 32 million passengers which are now being proposed by Luton Rising.

I have also been working to tackle local fly-tipping. In Westminster, I have been calling on Ministerial colleagues to give tougher sentences to those found guilty of fly-tipping. In the Environment Act, I voted for new measures to make it easier for the police to catch fly-tippers and prevent tips before they take place. I will continue to work on this issue.

This year I have also begun a campaign to extend the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the south and west of Hitchin. This would help to ensure that more of our green spaces, woodlands, chalk streams and other environmental assets are protected and can benefit from the advantages of being covered by an AONB. It would also be a true reflect of our area's status as a part of the broader Chilterns area.

With residents, I have also been looking into the operations of the Pumping Station at Burge End and I organised for a meeting with myself, representatives from Anglian Water and residents in January. I am clear that more action needs to be taken to stop sewage overflowing in the village and protect our chalk streams. Using the new powers given in the Environment Act, I will work with Ministerial colleagues and the water company to tackle this issue.

I will continue to work hard for residents as your local Member of Parliament. If you need assistance with any issue, please do get in touch.

Bim Afolami MP
Member of Parliament for Hitchin & Harpenden

County Council Report from Councillor David Barnard

2021 has been, as expected, a challenging year for Councils at every level. The pandemic has brought new challenges, and greatly enhanced existing responsibilities and commitments. The war between Russia and Ukraine brought further challenges to our Country and Hertfordshire in particular.

Herts. County Council received many millions of pounds from central government, which was distributed to our ten Districts for grant aiding the needy and appropriate communities. This ranged from the 80% government funded furlough employment scheme, which enabled families to get by, whilst not in work, and small/medium sized companies to weather the storm, and emerge to continue to employ as before.

Councils and Communities, clubs and organisations have received grants to maintain the village halls, community centres, and more areas which suffered severely by the loss of income due to the lockdown. Most of them have not only survived, but have used the time and grants to enhance their facilities. Much more has been achieved.

Adult Care, a major expense to Herts County Council, and Children's wellbeing and support, including "in care" has spiralled upward alarmingly, as might be expected, and we are pleased to report that additional and substantial Government funding has been received to help the Council fulfil its obligations. School meals have been extended into the holiday period, with vouchers being distributed to those who qualify.

As your local County Councillor, outside of the wider duties at County Hall, I have been busy supporting our villages and communities in my Hitchin Rural Division. £15,000 was allocated to my Members Locality Budget, (now returned to the lower level of £10,000), to give additional support to local requirements.

I granted £500 to each of my Primary Schools, to use for projects not covered within the Education Budget, along with an additional grant to purchase books for each school, to help educate the need for personal safety, etc. Parishes and other groups have all received grants from this budget, to enhance local amenities, and activities.

I am pleased to be in regular contact with the Parish Council Meetings across my Division as possible. This enables me to keep in close touch with the varying needs and aspirations of each Parish, and to bring news of Council activities to them.

20mph limits through Pirton remain a priority, and I am pleased to have negotiated this village to be examined and surveyed before any others in the County. This is, a lengthy process, as it may be that physical constraints may be necessary to slow down traffic. I will continue to press for a satisfactory outcome.

Fly tipping remains a constant problem and, in conjunction with the Police and NHDC, we will bring the criminal elements to justice, especially as fines have just been increased.

As we enter a new Council fiscal year, I will be happy to receive applications from community groups, for grant aiding specific projects. I am privileged to be a representative of this community, and will continue to strive for the maintenance, and enhancement of our area.

David Barnard

District Council Report from Councillor Claire Strong

These are some of the highlights from the last year.

The campaign to stop the expansion of Luton airport received the welcome news that the Secretary of State (SOS) has called the application in rather than allow Luton Council to make the decision as they own the site.

The council is going through a boundary review and this will mean all our elections will be with the new boundaries in 2024. The number of councillors is likely to change to 50 (+/- 1) as the number of residents is growing so the number of councillors will not reduce. The new wards and boundaries will be decided in a special meeting in December after the proposals have been out for consultation. The council has also decided that going forward, elections will be held every 4 years. There will be a parish review once the council boundary review is complete.

The Inspector's report on the local plan is still awaited. This was expected in the autumn last year so it is now well overdue. The building and delivery of new homes in the district is behind because planning applications have been waiting for the local plan to be approved. However, some are now coming forward, but because the plan is not approved and the sites are on green belt the decisions have to be made by the SOS. The council now only has just over a 1 year land supply and therefore is at risk to hostile applications from developers on sites outside the plan.

Green issues remain high on the agenda at North Herts and 10,000 trees were given away in the autumn. The Council has installed solar panels on the roof of the offices in Gernon road but a lot more needs to be done to reach the net zero target by 2030.

The waste service at various times through the year has been hit with staffing difficulties from covid sicknesses, resulting in missed / delayed bins in some areas. The crews took on many temporary agency staff and were working on Saturdays to catch up and minimise disruption to the service.

The Southern Rural Committee was chaired by Cllr Frost and we managed to award all the available grant money from our budget. We also had a presentation from the Police and highlighted to them at the meeting the concerns from the parishes on theft, fly tipping and speeding.

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Claire Strong

Rural Police Report



Prevention First

Hitchin Rural Police Report April 2021 – March 2022

It has been an eventful year for the Rural North Hertfordshire Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) that continues to be based at Hitchin Police Station. We have said goodbye to several members of the team and welcomed several more.

Staff Update

Chief Inspector (CI) John Roche has taken over from CI Sally Phillips as the senior officer in charge of the North Hertfordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) area. CI Roche is responsible for overseeing all of the policing teams based in North Hertfordshire.

Inspector (Insp) James Lant continues to lead the North Hertfordshire Safer Neighbourhood Team, managing both the Urban and Rural areas.

Sergeant (Sgt) Guy Westwood is the SNT Sergeant responsible for the operational leadership of the Hitchin Rural SNT Police Constables (PCs) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). There are currently 3 PC's and 2 PCSO's assigned to the Hitchin Rural area.

PC Clare Wallace has replaced former PC Keith Harding, who retired in December of 2020. PC Wallace has responsibility for supporting the CODICOTE and KNEBWORTH wards

PC Gary Pugsley continues in his role supporting the HITCHWOOD, CHESFIELD and KIMPTON wards.

PC Claire Ross has replaced PC Johnie Streeter, who has moved to a crime prevention role at Herts Police Headquarters. PC Ross has responsibility for supporting the OFFA, HOO and CADWELL wards.

PCSO Stuart Stone continues in his role, supporting the CODICOTE, KNEBWORTH and CHESFIELD wards, as well as the GOSMORE and ST IPPOLYTS areas of HITCHWOOD ward.

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PCSO Heather Burrows continues in her role supporting the OFFA, HOO, KIMPTON and CADWELL wards, as well as part of the HITCHWOOD ward.

Community

We are continuing to see good take-up of our Online Watch Link (OWL) service, which allows residents to receive regular email updates, including crime alerts, scam warnings and crime prevention advice. Our PCs and PCSOs have been visiting homes in the area to promote the OWL service – you may have received one of our leaflets or fliers or spoken to one of your local officers. If you're not already signed up, visit www.owl.co.uk to register.

We are also seeking to promote the Community Drivesafe scheme, which seeks to make local roads safer by educating drivers through the use of roadside speed monitoring and promoting awareness. Volunteers will be provided the equipment needed to conduct roadside speed checks, and motorists noted to be exceeding the speed limit will be sent an advisory letter or visited by a police officer.

Local Priorities

Fly Tipping

Fly Tipping continues to be an issue in the Hitchin Rural area, especially on the roads near to the A505. Officers are continuing to engage with the North Herts District Council (NHDC) to have fly tips removed when identified on patrol and do seek to seize and evidence any identifying information that is present in the tipped waste. The majority of the fly tips identified consist of household waste, and where identifying information is present, appear to originate from outside the Hitchin Rural area. We are encouraging all residents to continue to report all fly tips, and to ensure that any waste carriers used are properly licensed.

Speeding

Reports of speeding continue to be frequent, especially along the main roads in villages. We have conducted several speed monitoring activities at the roadside, as well as the PCC's Speed Camera Vans attending suitable areas. We now have more Speed Monitoring Equipment trained officers on the team, who will be out and about in the identified hotspots.

Burglary

Burglary incidents have fallen recently, with a low incidence through the Hitchin Rural Area. We encourage residents to remain vigilant, and to refer to the Herts Police website, where relevant crime prevention advice can be found.

Hitchin Rural Policing Team

Financial Report - Ted Roberts Clerk and RFO

The council finances are in a strong position, a decision having been taken to bolster funds towards the new pavilion project. Good initial progress has been made, but major expenditure lies ahead on such items as architect's fees for detailed drawings and a significant sum to pay for new storage facilities at the Recreation Ground.

There are still outstanding VAT repayments to HMRC, although a major step forward was taken when an agreement was made with the Pirton Sports & Social Club for a significant payment. HMRC have been asked to reduce the overall sum owing, but no response has yet been received.

Income on the balance sheet shows a significant reduction over the previous year, but that had been artificially increased by the S106 monies (over £31,000) for the playground refurbishment. The precept was raised by £4000 towards the pavilion project and a sum of £6000 shown against Miscellaneous is the VAT repayment contribution from the PSSC. This is shown against Expenditure as VAT to HMRC.

Council expenses overall were not significantly different from the previous year, once the figures for VAT reclaim and the playground build are taken out. Website and IT expenses were up again, but this was down in the main to the new 'village website' for which a generous donation had been received from the Pumpkin Club. Some monies still remain in the funds earmarked for this project.

Village maintenance costs were similar to the previous year. Grass cutting and strimming contracts had been renewed for 3 years at the previous costs, while for the Recreation Ground a new 2-year arrangement at a slightly higher cost is now in place with the existing contractor, but for an additional two cuts a year. No expenditure on the maintenance of Blacksmith's Pond was necessary this year, apart from paint for the railings, as the pond is currently in a fair state. Going forward, more microchalk treatment is envisaged and some clearance of vegetation. This will be reflected in next year's accounts.

Salary costs were slightly down, despite a small pay increase for the Clerk. This is accounted for by the Clerk taking more of his annual leave following the relaxation of some Covid regulations. Office expenses were little different. There were no S137 payments, as the Council has now adopted the General Power of Competence, with a CiLCA qualified clerk. Councillors themselves, of course, receive no remuneration for their work. Subscriptions to professional bodies and publications were on a par with previous years.

The Council awarded some grants, including another £200 to Essex & Herts Air Ambulance and £250 to the PSSC. The Council supported the Royal British Legion, providing a wreath for Remembrance Day. Village organisations are encouraged to apply to the Parish Council for grant funding. Application forms are available on the Council's website under Parish Council/Policies.

Parish Council finances are subject to local accountability and annual audit. An independent Internal Auditor (IAC Audit) verifies the Council's financial procedures. The annual accounts were approved at the Parish Council meeting held on 14 April 2022. The Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 will be placed on notice boards and examined by the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn. A Public Rights period will run from 13 June – 22 July 2022.

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Income and Expenditure 2021-22

	<u>2021-2022</u>	<u>2020-2021</u>
Balance Brought Forward:	51,563.00	57,722.73
General Fund		
Income		
Precept	41,226.52	37,334.58
VAT Recovered	5,972.79	4,837.08
Rental Income	2,558.99	2,538.16
Grants	773.48	31,074.60
Donations	350.00	99.83
Miscellaneous	<u>6,287.67</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Income sub-total	<u>57169.45</u>	<u>75,885.25</u>
	57,169.45	75,885.25
Expenditure		
Clerk's Salary	8,449.96	8,838.73
Office Expenses	1,060.91	1,124.11
Council Expenses	4,957.33	5,200.96
S137 Payments	0.00	674.50
Other Grants	475.00	0.00
Village Maintenance	7,730.22	8,755.60
PSSC/Recreation Ground	4,895.57	4,993.58
Play Areas	650.00	31,629.18
Allotments	187.55	183.06
Subscriptions	784.54	776.62
VAT to HMRC	6,000.00	3,425.01
VAT Input	<u>2,042.00</u>	<u>8,885.14</u>
Expenditure sub-total	<u>37233.08</u>	<u>74,486.49</u>
Projects & Sub-Committees		
Net Expenditure		
Bury Trust	750.00	0.00
Contingency	0.00	0.00
Hedges, Trees & Planting	0.00	0.00
Legal Fees	0.00	0.00
Tennis Courts	2,160.00	0.00
Neighbourhood Plan	0.00	125.49
Parish Paths (P3)	0.00	0.00
Playground	0.00	6,833.00
Pond Maintenance	0.00	0.00
Sports Pavilion	5,104.00	600.00
Youth Council	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Net Expenditure Sub-Total	<u>8014.00</u>	<u>7,558.49</u>
	45,247.08	82,044.98
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	11,922.37	(6,159.73)
Balance Carried Down:	63,485.37	51,563.00

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