

PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

The **Annual Parish Meeting** of
Pirton Parish Council was held on
Thursday 12th May 2011 at Pirton Village Hall.

Present:

Mrs D Bailey
Mr T Gammell
Mr J Hayes
Mr R Marshall
Mr D Saunders (Chairman)
Mrs P Waters (vice-Chairman)
Mrs J Smart (Clerk)

Also Present:

County Councillor Nigel Brook
PC Matt Jenkins and colleague
Two residents

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Submitted by Mr R Easterbrook

MINUTES OF THE 2010 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

These were agreed to be a true record of the proceedings and were duly signed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Mr Saunders had prepared and circulated a report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs J Smart, Responsible Financial Officer to the Parish Council, had prepared and circulated a report relating to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2011, which is attached to these minutes, together with a copy of the Income and Expenditure account.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mr Brook welcomed the two new Parish Councillors and thanked continuing Councillors for their work over the previous four years. Mr Brook reminded Councillors that his Locality Budget Grant was still in operation. Mr Brook was pleased to report that Council Tax would be maintained at the same level for the third year running. Although the County Council had reduced some services, none had been cut. Mr Brook was thanked for the valuable support he provides to the Parish Council.

POLICE REPORT

PC Jenkins had prepared a written report which is attached to these minutes. In answer to a question. PC Jenkins confirmed that Mr Kitchiner still carries a pager under the Rural Intelligence Gathering System.

Mr Saunders thanked PC Jenkins for attending the meeting

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mrs Strong had not submitted a report.

There were no other reports and the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Pirton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report, May 2011

The final year of the current Council

This report covers the period May 2010 – May 2011, but as alluded to in the subheading it is the final year of the four year term of the current Council. So in effect this is an “end of term report”, as such, to keep things in context brief reference is first being made to the preceding three years.

Year 1; the new Council formulated a priority wish list of items on which it would like to concentrate during the ensuing four years, however, before any plans could be formulated we became embroiled in and were dominated, by “the gipsy crisis”. There is no need to elaborate, suffice to say we spent a great deal of time effort and money dealing with a situation, which dissipated by itself after seven months or so – *what a waste!*

The only other happening of note that year was the establishment of a committee charged with investigating, formulating and implementing plans to replace the playing field pavilion.

Year 2; was far less frenetic, we saw; the formulation of a committee with a view to producing a Parish Plan; the first three parish Council newsletters; the commencement of bi-annual litter pick and clean up days; also the Parish Council website was introduced.

Year 3; early investigations regarding the establishment of allotments were made; we conducted a housing needs survey; Coleman’s Close (Middle Green) was finally handed over to the parish; the Bury Trust was re-structured and we had another minor hiatus when plans regarding possible development on the large field adjacent to Priors Hill were included in the Land Allocation document for North Herts.

THE CURRENT YEAR

We have continued with the general ongoing business of the Council; planning matters, highways, consultations, correspondence, village maintenance etc.

Planning: there is still no news on the Priors Hill development this has been delayed by the district Council due to changes in the ground rules regarding planning. Some discussion took place between ourselves and the owners of land behind the Motte and Bailey regarding a development of some affordable housing, but this proved fruitless as this is scheduled land with little chance of **any** development. The Council cannot afford or justify the purchase of this plot, which has subsequently been offered for sale by auction but currently remains unsold. There has also been an application to build 8 “affordable houses” at the entrance to the village in Holwell Road, this has been controversial and the Council have reluctantly objected to the development, the outcome of this application is still awaited.

(reluctant, only because the quest for affordable housing continues with little immediate hope of success)

Highways: As ever we have little input concerning highway matters; The council expressed concern over the state of Shillington Road but these concerns have been dismissed by the authorities. Whilst not directly affecting Pirton we are supporting Holwell parish council with regard to implementing speed restrictions at the junction of Holwell Road with the A600. The access over private land to the recreation ground has been improved by the owner with the aid

of a contribution by the Parish Council. It is hoped that the overflowing of the pond into the high Street has been prevented from recurring by virtue of organising a dredge of the overflow ditch along Walnut Tree Road. Due to financial restraints it has not been possible to continue funding for the special cuts required to maintain the Heritage Verge along Hitchin Road.

GENERAL MATTERS (in no particular order)

Youth: We are pursuing a policy of maintaining and improving our facilities and services for the youngsters of the village. In addition to the splendid work being done by the football club, cricket club scouts etc .we have organised a successful go-karting trip which we are hoping to follow with a paint balling escapade. Plans are well advanced for the installation of a “zipwire” adjacent to the play area at the recreation ground. The formation of a youth club is however proving much harder to implement, we are still working to this end but there are many hurdles yet to clear.

The Parish Plan: Unfortunately this worthy project has “finally died” there really was little enthusiasm from residents outside the council and those that were involved had dwindled to such an extent that continuing was no longer an option. However, as a “swansong” the group did produce a most useful village directory, which was delivered to all households in June.

Replacement pavilion: This is another “failure” due this time not to apathy but the current financial climate and the almost complete lack of any prospective major funding. Plans were drawn up and approved but despite pruning the budget to a “mere” £500,00ish it became apparent that we would not be able to proceed as hoped. The committee are now investigating a piecemeal improvement of the existing facility.

The Village Pond & Great Green: two areas for which the Parish Council are responsible; A pond improvement day was held in October with the aid of volunteer parishioners, a great deal of clearing was done and much debris removed. There were, however, some tasks that were beyond us, so our efforts were augmented by some professional help from contractors. The broken bollards on Great Green have been replaced with rustic wooden posts, this has been achieved with the help of the community payback scheme (minor offenders who have been directed to perform community work)
The maintenance of both the pond and greens are ongoing projects which we shall continue to monitor and implement,

Telecommunications: We continue to improve the council website which we hope will eventually become a first stop for those seeking official and current information concerning the village. The orange telecom mast has been in situ for some eight or nine years now and we are currently attempting to re-negotiate the lease having already secured a significant payment covering “underpaid back rental”. There was a suggestion back in June of a possibility that a private company may be in a position to supply faster broadband access to the village by using a fibre optic cable under licence from British Telecom but to date there has been no further developments on this project.

Allotments: This has probably been our most notable achievement, not only of the year, but the entire four year term. The existing land which had hitherto contained only two plots amidst an overgrown wilderness has been reclaimed from other use, totally cleared, cultivated, re-fenced and turned into eight good plots. Costs have been high, some £3,000 and still rising; but we are in receipt of a considerable grant to defray the costs of laying on a water supply. Apart from a minor asbestos scare the project can only be deemed a splendid success. Congratulations and many thanks must be extended to Cllr. Rodney Marshall who has taken the project on and worked tirelessly towards a successful conclusion. The only downside being

that we must now start the process again to find and implement further plots in order to satisfy demand.

Finance: In these days of financial restraint we have been fortunate in obtaining grants for most of our major projects; as previously mentioned we are hoping to maximise our income from the Orange mast. Recently we have discovered a new source of income, It seems that all major developments carry a section 106 levy most of which is ours to claim for use in specific areas of development. Pirton's pot is currently not particularly large but what we have may be left to accrue or be used to contribute to smaller projects, we are currently investigating this. Despite these potential new income streams it was found necessary, in November, to increase our precept by 2% to £26,700 per annum. This is fairly insignificant in the scheme of things and it must be remembered that, unlike most parish councils we have no other major source of income.

Comings and Goings: We were unfortunate this year to lose the services of two councillors; Rosie Hamilton McLeod and Margaret Johnson. Both these ladies found it necessary to resign due to changed personal circumstances. Both will be sadly missed but it may be that they will be in a position to return at some point in the future. However, this loss was mitigated by allowing us to appoint at least one worthy successor in Richard Easterbrook who attended his first meeting in January. Welcome Richard, you are already making a significant contribution. Lack of time and constitutional procedure prevented us from filling the second vacancy.

CONCLUSION

As this report is formulated the "election" for a new council has taken place; sadly there were only seven nominees for the nine positions, however, this will give us the opportunity to co-opt two new and useful councillors who were probably too shy and retiring to offer themselves for election

The outgoing council can be justifiably proud and pleased with their efforts over the past four years and it must be that we wish our successors all the best in the expectation that they will continue the good work and will achieve even more over the coming four years..

Sincere apologies for any omissions or thanks not extended. We are greatly indebted to many friends and parishioners who are helpful and supportive beyond the normal terms of public spirit.

We are especially grateful to County Councillor Nigel Brook and District Councillor Clair Strong who are both of great assistance to us between them they attend and advise at most of our meetings.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their efforts, there really is much unseen work that goes on behind the scenes. We here in Pirton have a good and dedicated team, all of us are readily approachable and will do the best we can for the benefit of "one of the best village in Hertfordshire". *(Exactly as previous closing remarks but none the less valid for that)*



PIRTON PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Statement – 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011

An income and Expenditure Account for the 2010/2011 financial year is attached. Amounts in some of the headings are broken down in detail on the reverse and represent the day-to-day running costs of the Council, including village maintenance and ongoing responsibilities.

Towards the end of each year the Council holds a Budget Meeting to review the following year's finances. The Council keeps a close check on expenditure at its monthly meetings and controls the budget carefully. At the budget meeting in December 2010, Councillors agreed that they wished to keep any increase in the precept as low as possible, as the District Council would have to make cuts in expenditure in the coming year. However, the Parish Council has a duty to provide allotments, and Councillors felt that some increase would be necessary to help towards the costs of providing these. After much discussion, it was resolved to increase the precept by 2% to £26,700, which would result in a deficit for the year of £110.00. This modest increase should also allow the Parish Council to meet its regular commitments during the following year, as well as making grants to village organisations that request financial assistance. It was no longer necessary to set aside money for the Parish Plan, as this was not being proceeded with at this time, but funds were set aside towards the production costs of regular newsletters and also towards youth projects.

The Parish Council has been fortunate enough to receive a number of grants to help with costs of various projects during this financial year, including grants towards the improvements to the pond, including one of £500 made by the Pumpkin Club. The Parish Council also received £750 from Nigel Brook's Locality Grant towards the work of preparing the allotments and £6,000 from the Big Lottery Awards for All fund to cover the cost of installing water on the allotments.

It had been noticed that Orange Communications had missed a review of the rental paid to the Parish Council for the mast in the Recreation Ground. After many requests and reminders, Orange had paid over £850 in back rent. NHDC had informed the Parish Council that they believed the rent paid for the mast was below market prices for such installations, and the Parish Council had appointed an Agent to investigate this and to negotiate a new lease on behalf of the Parish Council.

Offa and Hoo Ward Police Report for 2010 – 2011

From :- Matt Jenkins

As of October 2010 the Hitchin Safer Neighbourhood Team was re-structured in line with all Safer Neighbourhood teams in Hertfordshire to ensure that all teams across the county work to a set shift pattern. This unfortunately does not allow any flexibility to swap shifts to accommodate meetings and other events resulting in me not being available to attend local meetings on my patch if I am not on duty.

Crime figures for reporting period 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011 for the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) of which we are part of, once again show an overall reduction in crime and an increase in the overall detection rate across the region.

This importantly translates to less actual victims of crime, and increased satisfaction for those members of the public who have seen their crime detected, as well as more offenders facing sanctions.

Comparing recorded crimes in Pirton from last year to this year for the recording period of 1st April to 31st March there has been an increase in crime from 20 to 34 recorded crimes.

This is still well below recorded crime figures from 2006 to 2009 (50, 40, and 41).

As feared, in the current austere financial climate there has been an increase in burglaries both in our towns and rural locations.

Comparing the recording period of 1st April to 31st March for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 there has been an increase in reported burglaries from 65 to 90 across HOO and OFFA wards.

The increase is mainly down to burglaries and attempted burglaries to sheds, barns and commercial premises with burglaries to dwellings thankfully remaining low.

The Safer Neighbourhood team have been assisted by Roads Policing units and the Hitchin Intervention team with numerous operations around the HOO and OFFA wards to combat rural crime and target criminals travelling into and out of Hertfordshire from the Bedfordshire borders.

These operations along with high visibility patrols are ongoing.

On 1st December 2010 several raids were carried out in Bedfordshire resulting in seven arrests and large quantities of stolen property from North Herts southern rural burglaries being recovered and returned to its rightful owners.

The Rural Intelligence Gathering System (RIGS) has now been in operation in North Hertfordshire for over a year with more than 100 pagers having been distributed to subscribers of the project allowing them to receive messages in relation to suspicious incidents sent out by other users and the Police.

A property marking scheme called SelectaDNA using a paintable substance that is invisible until illuminated by ultra-violet light has been launched in the North Herts rural area.

Each pack of the SelectaDNA product contains a unique synthetic DNA material that will assist in identifying any marked property stolen or removed.

Following an initial launch of the scheme in the Kings Walden area the product is now being promoted in and around all of the villages in North Herts southern rural.

Burglaries aside there has been a notable decrease in many other crime types across the North Herts CSP, examples of which are :-

- Robbery down 42.3%
- Serious Violent Crime down 60%
- Racially / Religiously Aggravated Offences down 18.9%
- Theft from Person down 16.5%
- Shoplifting down 14%
- Distraction Burglary down 13.3%
- Theft from Motor Vehicle down 9.7%
- Criminal Damage down 9%
- Serious Sexual Offences down 6.9%
- Anti social behaviour incidents down by 13.2%

All of the above has quite clearly improved the quality of life for North Herts and all those who live, work or visit here. (not too cheesy I hope !!).

Regards

Matt Jenkins