



# Pirton Parish Council

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## Annual Report 2016 - 2017



Pirton Parish Council Annual Report gives a review of the activities of the Council and the financial report for the year ending 31st March 2017.

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[www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk)

# Annual Report 2016 - 2017

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## Contact Details

### PARISH COUNCILLORS

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### COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

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**David Barnard**  
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**District Councillor**  
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**District Councillor**  
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### PARISH CLERK

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### County Councillor's Report

I have been proud to be your Hertfordshire County Councillor for the last four years and am delighted to have been re-elected for the next 4 years.

The electoral borders have been moved this year, and I have the privilege of extending my Herts. County Council Division to include St. Paul's Walden, bringing the electorate up to around 12,000 spread across a very wide, but beautiful area of Hertfordshire.

I am a serving member of the Development Control Committee, and the Environment, Planning, and Transport Cabinet Panel.

We have recently had meetings with Govia, the train operator on the Hitchin mainline, to negotiate better trains, timetables and destinations for 2018, as well as pointing out the frequent shortcomings in the commuter service to London. Additionally, 2018 will see trains crossing London to connecting services to Gatwick and Brighton.

I represent the County Council on the Luton Airport Consultative Committee, which is important to ensure that "over-flying" and night time flights are properly controlled. Luton has expanded at a brisk rate this last year, reaching over 14 million passengers, as it progresses to its target of 18 million passengers per annum. It also proposes to build "Century Park", a commercial and light industrial park adjacent to the airport, which will provide an extra 7,000 job opportunities. All good news for travellers and workers, ... as long as there are proper transport links provided which will protect Hitchin and surrounding areas from total "gridlock".

Herts County Council has made provision for increased accommodation of secondary school pupils, and continues to expand both the Hitchin Girls', and Hitchin Boys' Schools for next year, and has provided additional places at The Priory School. Additional accommodation is agreed for Pirton school. Our roads and footpaths are always in need of upgrading and repair. Despite financial constraints, I have tried to spread my limited budget across the district, but there's never enough funding available!

My Herts. County Council Annual Locality Budget is used by me to support local community groups and clubs to obtain equipment and services to improve the lives of our residents. Our Parishes and Communities work hard to improve our lives. Pirton Parish has benefitted financially from grants made during the last year, and I have now had my pot replenished for the next year!

I regularly met with our Police and Enforcement teams to help make our area a safer place to live in, and I am pleased to report that criminal fly-tippers have been caught and heavily fined. New prosecutions are currently being processed.

My Councillor colleague's visits to Parish Council meetings mean that I can keep in touch with local concerns and aspirations, and pass on new information to them, from the Council, and other organisations. Now that I have been re-elected, I will be working for Pirton and area, and supporting your Parish Council.

Thank you

**David Barnard**

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## Chairman's Report

This report covers the period from May 2016 to April 2017.

There have been several changes within the Parish Council during the last 12 months – some long-standing Councillors stood down, for a variety of reasons. On behalf of the current Parish Council, I would like to thank all of them for their hard work and dedication. I would also like to express my thanks to my fellow Councillors and the Parish Clerk, for their support since I was elected Chair. New Councillors have been co-opted, though we do currently have one vacancy, please contact the Parish Clerk if you are interested – his email is [parishclerk@pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:parishclerk@pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk).

### Planning

Our work over the last 12 months has been dominated by the Elm Tree Farm application, which has been time-consuming and difficult to deal with. There have been multiple changes to a complex application which ran to 120 drawings & 35 supporting documents. In an attempt to get a full understanding of the application itself and of the process for major development, we had many meetings with the developer, the planners, representatives from highways, county and district councillors, parishioners and amongst ourselves to finalise our responses. We also commissioned an independent Highways report to review the suitability of the construction traffic being routed through Pirton. At the last Planning Control meeting on 25 May 2017, the Reserved Matters were given full approval but the Construction Traffic Management plan has been deferred again pending more information for Highways. We will continue to work with the Developers and NHDC towards the best outcome for Pirton.

Aside from this, we had 38 other applications to consider, ranging from minor alterations, through extensions to new builds. In all the Parish Council objected to only 8 applications.

### Neighbourhood Plan

NHDC have now conducted its "Regulation 16" public consultation on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. Not only were residents and businesses within the parish notified of the consultation, so were a number of statutory consultees such as the Highways Authority, and others with an interest in the Neighbourhood Plan such as the Chilterns Management Board and developers and landowners.

We are now working closely with the NHDC to appoint an independent Examiner, who will scrutinise the draft Plan to ensure it meets the Government's "Basic Conditions"; and that all of the statutory processes have been followed. We hope this examination will start in June 2017 and it will take several weeks. Once this stage has been completed there will be a village Referendum to give all residents the chance to decide if the Plan is adopted as a formal planning document

Already the Parish Council has made use of the draft Plan in their representations to the NHDC over the Elm Tree Farm planning application. The policies in the draft Plan can't be applied directly yet, but the underlying evidence base is all there to be used.

### Environment

We have established a maintenance programme to improve both the quality of the water and the aquatic wildlife and flora in Blacksmiths Pond. Excess leaf-fall and over-feeding the ducks has resulted in the pond having an overdose of nutrients, which has caused a bloom of algae and duckweed. This in turn has the effect of reducing the amount of oxygen in the water. The pond is being treated with a compatible natural remedy which reduces the excess nutrients; this will continue until the duckweed blooms are reduced to a controlled level

The Bury & Toot Hill continue to be managed by the Bury Trust. Cattle graze the Bury to keep the grass growth in check and this also provides a small income. The

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Trust also maintains and repairs the perimeter fencing which surrounds The Bury. The recent replacement of an 85m section of fencing adjacent to St Mary's church, was completed by the Trust, with some financial help from the Parish Council. Our thanks go to Dick Woodward, who each year spot-sprays the thistles on The Bury, to keep them in check. Periodically, the Trust organises volunteer work-parties to deal with excess growth of grass, weeds and scrub on Toot Hill, and other management projects. We are currently looking into funding opportunities to upgrade Jack's Paths which runs along the top edge of Toot Hill and has fallen into such a poor state it is currently not in use.

We continue to monitor all street lights, road signs, potholes and footpaths and report any faults to HCC Highways. All the benches around the village have also been pressure cleaned and varnished.

### **Communications**

Our main sources of communication are the monthly Parish Council meetings, the Parish Council website and Facebook pages and the newsletters. Each monthly meeting begins with a 15 minute public session: this is your chance to come along and talk to us. The minutes of every meeting will be published on our website and also displayed on the board in the Church porch. We try and keep everyone up-to-date by posts on the Facebook page – if you would like to join in these conversations, please bear in mind our usage policy which is posted at the top of the page. We have produced several information sheets regarding the Elm Tree farm development, as well as the newsletters. We hope you find these useful and informative.

### **Speed Limits**

We are currently assessing the responses to a proposal for a possible 20mph speed limit throughout the village. This has the backing of our County Councillor, David Barnard. If you didn't receive a reply slip with the last newsletter which came out on April, please contact the Parish Clerk to register your opinion.

### **Other Achievements**

During the year, we have implemented the Great Green Parking Policy, to help all residents around the Green to be able to park safely within permitted spaces whilst protecting the trackway and access to residents' homes. Our thanks to the majority of residents for complying with our guidelines on this.

In conjunction with the P3 Partnership, a new walkway has been completed leading from Priors Hill to the Driftway, making this a much safer access to the Chiltern Hills walkways.

We have registered the Nature Reserve by the Vicarage as a Community Asset. We put in a bid for the land on the other side of the footpath but the bidding at auction went very much above our limit.

We have registered the Parish Council as owners of some pockets of land throughout the village – Chipping Green, part of Great Green and part of Blacksmiths Pond.

We have helped village groups by giving grants – Beavers, St Marys' Church, The Fox Christmas Lights, the Craft Group, the Sports & Social Club and Lea Sports PSG Football Club.

**Alison Smither**

### Rural Police Report

From :- Hitchin Rural Policing Team

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of changes to your Rural Safer Neighbourhood Policing team which continues to be based at Hitchin Police Station.

Inspector Duncan Sales and PC Chris Suckling both retired in January (although Chris does appear to maintain an affinity with Hitchin Rural as we see him most days riding around the lanes and tracks on his bike). The team is now headed up by Inspector 307 Richard Lilley who joined the team in January. PS 1913 Steve Oliphant continues to manage both the Hitchin rural and urban teams of Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers.

PC 272 Matt Jenkins returned to the team at the end of July 2016 following what turned out to be a protracted secondment to a specialist department based at the Stanborough Headquarters, and was pleased to resume responsibility for the OFFA, HOO and part of CADWELL wards. Matt continues to be assisted by PCSO 6510 Heather Burrows who in addition to OFFA, HOO and CADWELL wards also has PCSO responsibilities for HITCHWOOD and KIMPTON wards.

PC 1738 Keith Harding continues to maintain responsibility for CODICOTE and KNEBworth wards and he is now assisted by PCSO Phoebe Coates who replaced PCSO Michelle Trussell from the beginning of April this year.

PC 2750 Dave Hine joined the rural team in January to replace PC 1690 Chris Suckling taking on ward responsibility for HITCHOOD (Whitwell), KIMPTON, WYMONDLEY, GRAVELEY and CHESFIELD (which includes part of the Great Ashby estate in Stevenage). Dave will be assisted by both PCSO Heather Burrows and PCSO Phoebe Coates

#### Operation ASTARE

Last year we saw a significant rise in poaching and poaching related anti-social behaviour across the east and south west areas of Hitchin Rural resulting in several thousands of pounds' worth of damage being caused to land and property belong to our farming and game-keeping community.

Owing to the frequency and nature of the offending, extra Police resources were drafted in to assist uniformed Safer Neighbourhood and Intervention officers.

A number of initiatives were put in place including targeted covert and high-visibility patrols and from intelligence gathered during the course of investigating a number of the crimes a warrant was executed at a location in Luton.

As a result of the operation (ASTARE) that ran from July 2016 to February 2017, ten vehicles (4 x 4 vehicles) were seized with none being returned to date.

Ten suspects have been arrested for a number of offences including theft and criminal damage and at this time two males have been convicted of theft offences.

#### Operation Safer Streets

The PCSO's are continuing to roll out the safer streets campaign offering crime prevention advice, home security surveys and signing people up to the online neighbourhood watch. This is a key part of how we can keep in touch with you and how you can get up-to-date information from us.

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### Other news / Events

Over the coming months you will still receive our monthly parish newsletters which will include information about events and will keep you updated on reported crime and anti-social behavior.

This year the Hitchin Rural Safer Neighbourhood Team will be attending the two day Whitwell (Codicote) Steam Fair on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June. Please come along to support the event and have a chat with officers about any concerns or issues you may have.

Please find a ward-by-ward breakdown of overall and specific crime types for recording period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March for years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017

Thank you for your continued support.

All Crime CSP	CRIME				OUTCOME				OUTCOME RATE		
	This Year	Last Year	Change	% Change	This Year	Last Year	Change	% Change	This Year	Last Year	% Change
G1E (Cadwell)	102	71	31	43.7%	11	14	-3	-21.4%	10.8%	19.7%	-8.9%
G1F (Gravelly & Wymondley)	73	62	11	17.7%	17	11	6	54.5%	23.3%	17.7%	5.5%
G1H (Hitchwood)	106	92	14	15.2%	10	16	-6	-37.5%	9.4%	17.4%	-8.0%
G1J (Offa)	89	64	25	39.1%	17	12	5	41.7%	19.1%	18.8%	0.4%
G1K (Hoo)	99	84	15	17.9%	5	21	-16	-76.2%	5.1%	25.0%	-19.9%
G1M (Kimpton)	58	33	25	75.8%	5	3	2	66.7%	8.6%	9.1%	-0.5%
G1N (Codicote)	75	61	14	23.0%	9	9	0	0.0%	12.0%	14.8%	-2.8%
G1P (Knebworth)	214	204	10	4.9%	40	46	-6	-13.0%	18.7%	22.5%	-3.9%

*Hitchin Rural Policing Team*



### Financial Report

Village maintenance was one of the largest items of expenditure this year, as usual, with just over £2,000 being spent on our Street Cleaner, almost £2,600 being spent on keeping the village greens cut and £3,500 on General Maintenance, although £2,200 of that was spent on new fencing on The Bury, towards which the Bury Trust contributed around £1,000.

Salaries and office expenses accounted for just over £9,000, although of course the Councillors themselves receive no remuneration for their work. Subscriptions to professional bodies and publications cost around £950; the allotments in Little Lane cost us around £150 to maintain and the Council is still paying off the loan it took out to purchase The Bury in 2002 (the final payment is in September 2017). Other expenditure on things such as the Neighbourhood Plan has all been funded from external grants. Just under £17,000 was spent on facilities at the Recreation Ground (heaters, floodlight repairs, facilities for the Firework Display, Boxing Day Run and Summer Fair, as well as electricity for the PSSC), but a good deal of this is refunded from PSSC income.

Money has been set aside this year to ensure that Blacksmith's Pond is maintained in tip-top condition. A water survey has been undertaken and the recommendations in the report will be implemented over the coming months and years.

The Council was pleased to be able to award grants to village organisations this year, including St.Mary's Church (£500 for grasscutting), Pirton School (£160 for commemorative bookmarks to mark the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday), Lea Sports PSG Football Club (£500 towards the cost of new goalposts), the Sports & Social Club (£340 for the installation cost of new bar grilles), £90 to Pirton Craft Group, £380 to the 15<sup>th</sup> Hitchin Beavers and £150 towards the Christmas Tree Lights at The Fox.

On the income side: virtually all of the Parish Council's income is derived from the Annual Precept, which this year brought in just over £31,500. Grants were at a premium this year – apart from money towards the Neighbourhood Plan, the Council received a small amount to install a Bike rack at the Village Hall and an amount towards the cost of renovating the floodlights at the Multi-Use Games Area at the Recreation Ground.

Village organisations are also encouraged to apply to the Parish Council for grant funding, if their operations improve the life of Pirton residents. Interested organisations should go to the Council website and download an application form: [www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk/reports](http://www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk/reports) and look for 'doc019' under 'Standard Documents'. Applications need to be made in advance of the Council's Annual Budget Meeting in November/December.

Parish Council finances are subject to local accountability and audit controls. The council employs the Parish Clerk as its Responsible Financial Officer (Local Govt. Act 1972 s151) to carry out the day-to-day administration and to prepare the annual accounts for audit. An independent internal auditor verifies the Council's financial procedures and processes with the annual accounts approved at the Parish Council meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The Annual Return for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 will be placed on notice boards and examined by the External Auditor, BDO Stoy Hayward LLP Chartered Accountants.

**Steve Smith**

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### Annual Accounts Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

	2016/17	2015/16
<b>Balance B/Forward</b>	<b>62,956.51</b>	<b>43,533.15</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Precept	31,582.63	29,739.16
Grants	8,133.92	8,955.84
Donations	11,558.94	21,040.39
Rental Income	1,381.00	78.00
VAT recovered	6,410.42	3,985.68
Bank Interest	25.54	118.58
Miscellaneous	101.14	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59,193.59</b>	<b>63,917.65</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Staff Costs & Expenses	9,119.12	8,894.84
Loan repayments	693.20	693.20
Council Expenses	3,922.01	3,721.82
Village Maintenance	9,960.65	7,400.70
PSSC/Recreation Ground	4,755.19	4,535.76
Allotments	162.51	144.53
Subscriptions	944.77	833.04
S137 Grants	1,300.10	17.00
Other Grants	1,047.00	0.00
Village Projects	30,005.10	14,321.46
VAT input	6,775.25	3,931.94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68,684.90</b>	<b>44,494.29</b>
<b>Increase/(Decrease) for the Year</b>	<b>(9,491.31)</b>	<b>19,423.36</b>
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b>53,465.20</b>	<b>62,956.51</b>
<b>Bank Balance at 31 March 2017</b>		
Unity Trust Account	<b>53,465.20</b>	

Stephen Smith  
Responsible Financial Officer  
Date: 14 April 2017

### **North Hertfordshire District Council Report**

This year has been a busy year at District Council.

Like the County Council, we have suffered from financial cuts from above, and have been striving to maintain the level of services which are expected of us. This has included investigating "sharing" partnerships with neighbouring authorities, and I am pleased to announce that we have formed a partnership with East Herts. Council, to economise and become more efficient on waste collection services, and with Herts. County Council, on Homecare.

The Local Plan process has reached the stage of submission of the proposed plan to the Secretary of State, who will appoint an Inspector, to study and evaluate the plan. I have registered to address the Inspector, probably in Autumn this year, and represent the views of my constituents on areas such as East of Luton, and development in our villages, not least Pirton.

The Local Plan can be amended by the Inspector, sent back to the Council for amendment, or rejected. Other than that, it will be approved, but still has to be approved at Full Council some time late in 2018.

I am currently the Chairman of the Planning and Development Control Committee, Southern Rural Committee, and Licensing Sub-Committee, as well as serving as a Board member of North Herts. Homes, and Chiltern Conservation Board.

It has been an interesting experience combining the two very different roles as your County Councillor and your District Councillor. I believe that my combined experience has brought a more complete service to the area.

My fellow District Councillors, Claire Strong, and Faye Frost, and myself, have worked together across the large area of our Ward, and will continue to serve our communities in the coming year.

Thank you.

**David Barnard**



### **Working Party Representatives and Representatives to Outside Bodies 2016/2017**

1. **Staffing Committee**  
Cllr A Smither (Chair), Cllr O Lister
2. **Pirton Sports and Social Club Committee**  
Mr S Smith (Chair), Mrs R Manders, Mr S Maple Mr D Saunders, Mr A Scott
3. **Planning Working Group**  
Cllr D Burleigh Cllr T Gammell Cllr M Goddard Cllr O Lister
4. **Pirton Youth Council**  
Youth Members
5. **Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**  
Mrs D Burleigh (Chair), Mr J Wild (Deputy Chair), Mr G Burleigh, Mr C Millar, Mr N Parkin,  
Mrs L Sexton, Ms J Stuart, Ms A Webb
6. **MUGA Working Group**  
Cllr O Lister (Chair), Mr S Maple (Vice Chair), Mr S Goodman (Tennis Club), Mr P Toyer (Lea  
Sports PSG)
7. **Bonfire Night Working Group**  
Mr S Smith (Chair), Mr A Scott, Mr S Alexander, Mr J Wiseman
8. **Representatives to Pirton Bury Trust**  
Cllr T Gammell Cllr O Lister Cllr A Webb
9. **Representatives to Parish Paths Partnership (P3)**  
Cllr J Rogers Cllr N Rowe Cllr A Smither
10. **Representative to Pirton Village Hall Management Committee**  
Cllr A Smither
11. **Representative to Rands Trust Committee**  
Cllr O Lister
12. **Representative to Hammonds Committee**  
Mrs P Waters