



Pirton Parish Council

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Annual Report 2014 - 2015



Pirton Parish Council Annual Report gives a review of the activities of the Council and the financial report for the year ending 31st March 2015.

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www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk

Chairman's Report

This report covers the period from May 2014 to April 2015, the fourth year of the current Parish Council. Another busy year! From May 2015 a new Council will be in place. There were only 8 nominations for Councillors, so no election is required. One more Councillor will be co-opted in due course to bring the Council up to the required 9 people. Anyone wishing to be considered should contact the Parish Clerk (712279).

Parish Newsletter.

We have produced two Newsletters again this year and propose to continue this going forward. The next one will be out in June/July. We aim to keep residents fully informed as to what is happening in the village and on Parish Council matters. We would remind readers that minutes of the monthly PPC meetings are on the Parish Council website (www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk) and displayed on the Church porch notice board.

Parish Clerk.

We welcomed Steve Smith as Clerk and Responsible Financial Office at the beginning of the financial year. Steve has settled in very well and is now completely up to speed with all matters relating to the Parish Council. I would personally like to thank him for his support and wish him a long and successful association with the Council.

Planning.

We have had our usual discussions over planning applications, some being relatively easy to resolve and others causing us a few problems. Last year we set up a Planning Committee to screen applications and then take our recommendations to the full Council. The planning application for 11 affordable homes at the end of Pollards Way was approved, is now nearing completion and being offered to those with a connection with Pirton. There are five shared ownership properties and six rental properties. These are currently being marketed by Court Homes (for any information contact them on 01462 440606).

Our main planning focus this year has been the proposed large scale developments in the village: housing on the Priors Hill site and also Holwell Turn land. These sites are being considered for development as part of NHDC's Draft Local Plan to meet the Government requirement for them to build 12,100 houses in our area by 2031. The Parish Council strongly objects to the quantity of housing proposed in Pirton – 142 houses. This would mean an increase in housing in Pirton of 27%, which is totally unacceptable. At a recent poll in the village the majority of parishioners stated that they would accept up to 48 houses, preferably on small developments. Your Council produced a very comprehensive, strong objection to NHDC's proposal. (This can be viewed on the Parish Council web site). We are awaiting decisions from NHDC as to which of the "preferred sites" in the area they will approve.

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Neighbourhood Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was set up last year to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. They have held a Village meeting and circulated a questionnaire to all adults and teenagers in the village to elicit their views on many subjects. These have now been analysed and they are currently in the process of writing a Draft Neighbourhood Plan. This will be circulated for consultation and eventually be given to the Parish Council for approval and submission to North Herts District Council.

The Pond.

We have had the usual problem with duck weed this past year. Alan Scott, one of our Councillors, organised a couple of working parties to try to clear it. This winter we have had a lovely clear pond. We will not hold our breath, but hopefully it will not return. We are still unsure about the viability of the outflow/inflow from the end of the pond into/out of the ditch in Walnut Tree Road. We cannot have this checked until the water level reduces. The footpath and the culvert here were repaired last summer.

Film Club.

In 2013, when we published the Pirton Parish Plan, one of the responses to questionnaires was strong support for a Film Club in the Village. This took a long time to arrange, not least in obtaining funding. We opened the Film Club in September last year with a showing of Skyfall and have been showing one film a month on average ever since. Parishioners appear to enjoy having a cinema in the village at £3.00 an evening! A good variety of genres have been shown and are planned for the future. Films are always advertised in the Parish Magazine and around the village on notice boards.

Pirton Sports and Social Club.

The PSSC has been trying for some years to improve facilities at the Recreation Ground. Planning permission was obtained to build a small kitchen extension to facilitate the serving of food and drink directly to the outside. This is now in place and has been much appreciated. One of their future projects is to improve the car park surface.

Pirton Youth Council.

The Youth Council is now an established organisation for young people living in Pirton of secondary school age. They meet approximately every other month. Their aim is to discuss issues relating to the village and suggest improvements and ideas. They have been involved in various projects; one of their most recent was to set up the Youth Club. A current project is to investigate the viability of a skate board park.

Pirton Youth Club.

This was successfully launched in the Autumn, with help and support from the Youth Council, who secured the funding for its initial costs. It is now an independent organisation, with its own officers. The Club meets twice a month at the Sports and Social Club for various activities and occasional outings.

Cllr Pamela Waters
Chairman

Rural Police Report

From :- Hitchin Rural Policing Team

The Hitchin Rural Safer Neighbourhood team now comprises of Three Police Officers and Two Police community Offices.

The Sgt is Sgt Stephen Oliphant who is also in charge of Hitchin urban.

Pc Chris Suckling 1690 covers Chesfield, Wymondley and Graveley, Hitchwood, Kimpton and Great Ashby.

Pc Keith Harding 1738 covers Knebworth and Codicote.

Pc Matt Jenkins 272 covers Offa, Hoo and Holwell.

PCSO Heather Burrows 6510 covers Offa, Hoo, Kimpton and Holwell.

PCSO Michelle Trussell 6592 covers Chesfield, Hitchwood, Knebworth, Codicote and Great Ashby.

Michelle takes over from PCSO Elaine Cuozzo who left the constabulary last month. PCSO Trussell has been a PCSO for 10 years working within North Herts at Letchworth, Baldock and Royston.

Pirton

2013/14 = 19 recorded crimes

2014/15 = 42 recorded crimes

4 Burglary Dwelling

8 Burglary Non Dwelling

10 Theft

2 Damage

7 Violent Crime

11 Other recorded crime

Operation Aquo

Operation Aquo focuses on and targets travelling /cross border criminals by using the mobile ANPR camera to identify and challenge suspect vehicles or people who are in our villages. Suspect vehicles are stopped, checked and the details of the persons within are clarified. This Operation helps us catch uninsured drivers and persons wanted by the police as well as disrupting any potential offenders coming into the area.

Operation Aroma recovers stash of tools and pets

Pets, a stash of stolen property and even a caravan were recovered following the execution of Operation Aroma - a warrant carried out by officers from North Herts at a Bedfordshire traveller site at the end of October 2014. The raid took place as a result of joint investigations by the Local Crime Unit, Operation Scorpion and the Safer Neighbourhood Team into a series of rural burglaries that had been happening in the region. The teams recovered power tools, plant equipment worth thousands of pounds, a cocker Spaniel, a Labrador and her seven puppies and even a ferret. In addition weapons including a pair of spiked knuckle dusters, brass knuckle dusters, a slingshot and a tin of BB pellets were discovered. The stolen animals were returned to their owners and the other recovered items are now being examined by forensic teams. They will be returned to their rightful owners where possible. Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley said: "I was thrilled with this result. We were aware of the spate of burglaries on-going in the area and had also received reports of stolen animals and dogs - so it was a real issue for us. As a result we utilised a large number of resources and worked closely with Bedfordshire Police to help tackle the problem quickly. The result of the warrant is a really good example of joint force working with excellent results." Thank you for your continued support.

Other news / Events

The quad bikes remain in use by the Rural Neighborhood Team at Hitchin Police Station. Both bikes have been deployed recently in coordination with Operation Aquo. The quad bikes have also been used on numerous occasions to search for Hare Coursers, poachers and vehicles being used anti-socially on tracks and farmers land.

We are also still focused on keeping the public informed and a number of safer neighbourhood days have been completed. These involve the PCSO's going door to door signing up new members onto the online neighbourhood watch and giving crime prevention advice. These days will continue throughout all of the villages.

Regards

Hitchin Rural Safer Neighbourhood Team



Financial Report

The annual accounts will show that two of the main items of expenditure this year have been the Recreation Ground and new Cinema Equipment for the Village Hall. In both cases, however, a good deal of the expenditure was met by grants from North Hertfordshire District Council and others, and by donations from The Sports & Social Club, Lea Sports PSG Football Club and other organisations.

Just over £3,000 was spent on the developing Neighbourhood Plan for the Village, but again most of this was met by grant income from local government.

The Parish Paths Partnership (P3), a partnership between Pirton Parish Council and Countryside Management Services (CMS) representing the Highway Authority – Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), spent almost £3,000 on new benches and on improving footpaths in the village.

In general, the Council managed its finances very well over the course of the year; indeed, the only expenditure cost heads which exceeded budget were staff costs after the appointment of a new Parish Clerk at the start of the year; and a very small increase in subscriptions to publications and to local and national organisations.

A review of insurance liability led to a large reduction in premiums and Council Costs were down overall on last year and around £1,000 under budget. Although the overall cost of village maintenance increased by some £750, it still came in at around £850 under the budgeted figure.

The Parish Council continues to place great emphasis on village projects and in its Budget for 2015-16 set aside just over £5,400 for local projects.

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 9th April 2015. The Annual Return for year ended 31st March 2015 will be placed on notice boards and examined by the External Auditor, BDO Stoy Hayward LLP Chartered Accountants.

Stephen Smith, B.Sc.(Hons.)
Responsible Financial Officer

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Annual Accounts Year Ended 31st March 2015

	2014/15	2013/14
Balance B/Forward	45,073.43	35,059.90
RECEIPTS		
Precept	30,330.00	28,880.00
Grants	10,175.64	7,034.00
Donations	7,740.15	4977.50
Allotment Rental	316.00	396.00
VAT recovered	4,160.34	2,247.37
Bank Interest	46.60	20.60
Miscellaneous	447.26	207.34
TOTAL	53,215.99	43,762.81
PAYMENTS		
Staff Costs & Expenses	8,476.97	7,038.10
Loan repayments	693.20	693.20
Council Expenses	4,032.45	4,144.19
Village Maintenance	9,382.70	8,638.26
PSSC/Recreation Ground	11,818.64	7,261.00
Subscriptions	911.57	907.41
Grants	700.00	1,540.00
Donations	17.00	197.50
Village Projects	15,484.60	1,071.71
VAT input	4,563.79	2,257.91
TOTAL	56,080.92	33,749.28
Debtors	78.00	0.00
Increase/(Decrease) for the Year	(2,942.93)	10,013.53
Balance Carried Forward	42,130.50	45,073.43
Bank Balance at 31 March 2015		
Unity Trust Account	42,130.50	

Mr S Smith
Responsible Financial Officer
Date: 23 April 2014

Working Party Representatives and Representatives to Outside Bodies 2014/2015

- 1. Staffing Committee**
Cllr P Waters (Chair), Cllr D Bailey
- 2. Pirton Sports and Social Club Committee**
Mr S Smith (Chair), Cllr D Saunders, Cllr A Scott, Mrs R Manders, Mr S Maple
- 3. Planning Committee**
Cllr P Waters (Chair), Cllr J Hayes, Cllr R Marshall, Cllr D Saunders
- 4. Pirton Youth Council**
Cllr D Bailey (Chair), Mr B Betts, Miss S Carroll, Miss R Testa, Miss M Betts, Mr T Rowe, Mr Z Gbadebo, Miss E Groves, Miss S-J Gumm
- 5. Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**
Mrs D Burleigh (Chair), Mr J Wild (Deputy Chair), Mr G Burleigh, Mr M Goddard, Cllr C-A McConnellogue, Mr C Millar, Mr N Parkin, Mrs L Sexton, Ms J Stuart, Ms A Webb
- 6. Allotments Working Group**
Cllr P Waters (Chair) and Cllr R Marshall
- 7. MUGA Working Group**
Cllr A Scott (Chair), Mr S Maple (Vice Chair), Mr S Goodman (Tennis Club), Cllr J Hayes, Mr S Smith, Mr P Toyer (Lea Sports PSG)
- 8. Bonfire Night Working Group**
Mr S Smith (Chair), Cllr A Scott, Mr S Alexander, Mr J Wiseman
- 9. Representatives to Pirton Bury Trust**
Cllr J Hayes, Cllr D Saunders
- 10. Representative to Parish Paths Partnership (P3)**
Cllr D Bailey
- 11. Representative to Pirton Village Hall Management Committee**
Cllr L Lauder
- 12. Representative to Rands Trust Committee**
Cllr J Hayes
- 13. Representative to Hammonds Committee**
Cllr P Waters

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Contact Details

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