



# Pirton Parish Council

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## Annual Report 2015 - 2016



Pirton Parish Council Annual Report gives a review of the activities of the Council and the financial report for the year ending 31st March 2016.

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

## **Chairman's Report**

This report covers the period from May 2015 to April 2016,

A new Council was elected in May 2015 at the start of a four year term of office. 8 Councillors were nominated for election and were duly appointed with a further Councillor being co-opted to bring our total to the requisite 9 members. During the course of the year 2 Councillors resigned due to other commitments and we successfully co-opted 2 further members to keep the Council at full capacity.

I was privileged to be elected Chair and what a busy year it has been!! I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support to me as Chair and for their ongoing enthusiasm and commitment to our village. I also extend my thanks to Steve Smith, our Clerk and Financial Officer, for his help during my first year as Chair as well as his drive and constant hard work on behalf of the Parish.

### **Planning**

We have continued to discuss and debate every planning application relating to Pirton whether this be a small extension or large scale development. The development proposals for land off Priors Hill and land adjacent to Elm Tree Farm have continued to dominate our discussions due to the size and scale of proposed development. The Parish Council objected to both applications on behalf of the village and represented the Parish at the North Herts District Council's Planning Committee meeting when the outline application for Elm Tree Farm was discussed.

The Priors Hill proposal is currently on hold awaiting a decision from Historic England as to whether some of the site should be designated as Scheduled Monument (similar to The Bury). The Elm Tree Farm proposal was granted outline planning permission for up to 82 houses. However, as 'all matters were reserved' the next stage of the application will decide how many houses are suitable, how safe access to the development site can be achieved and what landscaping will be needed. We will continue to represent the village to try to achieve the best possible outcome.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

To aid discussion on future planning applications, the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan will be an important document in helping to decide what development and changes to the village are acceptable in the next 15 years. The Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation is underway as this Report is being produced. Huge thanks go to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group who have worked incredibly hard over the past two years to produce the consultation document. The Plan includes policies ranging from housing design and the environment to internet connectivity and parking. The next stage of the process will be to incorporate any changes which emerge from the Pre-Submission Consultation. The Plan will then have to be agreed by North Herts District Council as the local planning authority and undergo scrutiny by an independent Examiner. Once this has been achieved there will be a Referendum whereby every parishioner will have the opportunity to vote to decide whether the Plan should be adopted as a formal planning document to guide future development in the Parish.

### **Communication**

We have continued to produce newsletters during the year. We hope that you find these informative and useful. The Parish Council is keen to engage as much as possible with parishioners so that we can keep everyone informed of matters relating

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to the village as well as listening to the concerns and wishes of residents. We have a website ([www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.pirtonparishcouncil.org.uk)), Facebook page and noticeboard (opposite The Fox). Contact details of the Clerk and Councillors are displayed on each of these sites and we encourage residents to talk to us. We welcome and value your views.

We hold our monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month in the Village Hall. The formal meeting commences at 8pm but this is preceded by 15 minutes of Public Participation when anyone in the village can come along to talk to us.

### **Sub-Committees and Focus Groups**

At the start of our current term of office, the Council met to agree priorities for the next four years. As a result of these discussions, we established five focus groups:

- S106 Funding
- Village Environment
- Play Area Renovation
- Outdoor Recreation
- Communication

**The S106 group** are responsible for liaising with NHDC's planning office with regard to 'unspent' and future S106 funds to improve the amenities and facilities in the village. To date, the group have successfully secured funding for a bike rack at the Sports & Social Club and are awaiting confirmation for a further bike rack outside the Village Hall. The group were involved in determining S106 funding to be derived from the proposed development at Elm Tree Farm to improve facilities at the Sports & Social Club and Recreation Ground.

**The Environment group** have organised work at Blacksmiths Pond to restore the healthy balance of the pond and commissioned a replacement village sign on Chipping Green. This new sign has been carved by local craftsman, Steve Jaynes, and is an identical copy of the original sign which was erected in celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

**The Play Area group** are investigating renovation of the Recreation Ground play area. A grant application to NHDC has been successful and further grants are being sought. Consultation with village school children and families has been undertaken to ensure the proposed new play equipment is what is wanted by users.

**The Outdoor Recreation group** have been working closely with Philip Turner Fitness Consultancy to provide outdoor exercise equipment which will be located at the Recreation Ground. A grant application has been made to Awards 4 All and the outcome is awaited.

**The Communication group** have the task of considering improvements to the way we engage with the Parish. They have been working on an updated Code of Conduct and Social Media policy with the aim of making communication between Councillors and with the Parish more effective and meaningful.

**Clr Diane Bailey**  
Chairman

### **Rural Police Report**

From :- Hitchin Rural Policing Team

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

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

Pc Chris Suckling 1690 covers Chesfield, Wymondley, 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 and Codicote

PCSO Chris Cornwell 6323 covers Great Ashby.

### **Pirton**

2014/15 = 42 recorded crimes

2015/16 = 33 recorded crimes

9 Burglary Dwelling

6 Burglary Non Dwelling

5 Theft

5 Damage

1 Violent Crime

7 Other recorded crime

### **Operation Gonzalas**

Working with our enforcement colleagues from the local authority, Operation Gonzalas focuses on targeting vehicles that are committing anti-social behaviour, environmental crime (fly-tipping) and speeding.

It involves officers and PCSO's utilising the speed detection laser to identify speeding vehicles and being visible at sites and locations used by 'fly-tippers' in order to carry out checks. These checks are also aimed at waste carriers to make sure they have the required license to carry out their business.

### **Operation Acetone**

This operation involves both hi-visibility and plain-clothed patrols to identify and disrupt potential burglars. It involves officers and staff from our Operation Scorpion Team, our Local Crime Unit (CID), our response teams as well as your local team. We have used information provided by you, our local communities, as well as other intelligence to help focus our efforts.

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## 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.

## 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.

*Regards*

*Hitchin Rural Safer Neighbourhood Team*

## Heather Burrows

**Police Community Support Officer**

**Hitchin Police Station**

**College Road**

**Hitchin**

**01438 757604**



Sgt Stephen Oliphant  
Safer Neighbourhood Team Sgt



PC Keith Harding  
Safer Neighbourhood Team PC



PC Matt Jenkins  
Safer Neighbourhood Team PC



PC Chris Suckling  
Safer Neighbourhood Team PC



PCSO Michelle Trussell



PCSO Heather Burrows  
Offa, Hoo, Chesfield, Hitchwood,  
Kimpton, Codicote and Knebworth  
Wards.



### Financial Report

The first thing people always want to know in the annual report is 'what has the Council spent its money on?' (or, rather: 'what has the Council spent *my* money on?'). This year, the largest item of expenditure was village maintenance (£7,400), with the main individual items being: grass cutting of verges and village greens (£2,560), our street cleaner Beth Clarke (£1,519), maintenance of Blacksmith's Pond (£700), general maintenance (signs, etc.) (£1,400), plus lesser amounts on new dog bins and the like.

Spending on the Recreation Ground and Sports & Social Club was just over £4,500, with most of the money (£3,300) being spent on mowing and groundman's work; in addition, around £640 was spent on controlling the nuisance of rabbits. Around £3,700 was spent on so-called 'Council Expenses'. This category includes things like Insurance (£2,200), Financial Audits (£500), Council Newsletters (£430) and around £250 each on room hire and the binding of Council minutes from 2003 to 2015.

Salaries and office expenses accounted for just under £8,900, although of course the Councillors themselves receive no remuneration for their work. Subscriptions to professional bodies and publications cost just over £830; the allotments in Little Lane cost us around £150 to maintain and the Council still has a year's worth of repayments to make (£700 p.a.) on the loan it took out to purchase The Bury in 2002. Other expenditure on things such as the Neighbourhood Plan has all been funded from external grants.

On the income side: virtually all of the Parish Council's income is derived from the Annual Precept, which is included as part of your Council Tax. You will see from your Council Tax Bill that Pirton has increased the amount it requests in precept by about 2.7% this year. At their Budget Meeting in November 2015, councillors felt that this was a reasonable increase to allow the Council to keep the village amenities to an acceptable standard. The figure for 'Donations' appears high at £21,000, but a large amount of this is money the Sports & Social Club has been accumulating towards the resurfacing of the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at the Recreation Ground and which has now been transferred into the Council's account.

Village organisations are also encouraged to apply to the Parish Council for grant funding, if their operations improve the life of Pirton residents. This year the Council has introduced a scheme for applications for grants. 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 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The Annual Return for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

	2015/16	2014/15
<b>Balance B/Forward</b>	<b>43,533.15</b>	<b>45,073.43</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Precept	29,739.16	30,330.00
Grants	8,955.84	10,175.64
Donations	21,040.39	7,740.15
Allotment Rental	78.00	238.00
VAT recovered	3,985.68	4,160.34
Bank Interest	118.58	46.60
Miscellaneous	0.00	447.26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63,917.65</b>	<b>53,137.99</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Staff Costs & Expenses	8,894.84	7,275.32
Loan repayments	693.20	693.20
Council Expenses	3,721.82	4,018.45
Village Maintenance	7,400.70	9,195.70
PSSC/Recreation Ground	4,535.76	11,818.64
Allotments	144.53	0.00
Subscriptions	833.04	911.57
S137 Grants	17.00	717.00
Village Projects	14,321.46	15,484.60
VAT input	3,931.94	4,563.79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44,494.29</b>	<b>54,678.27</b>
<b>Increase/(Decrease) for the Year</b>	<b>19,423.36</b>	<b>(1,540.28)</b>
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b>62,956.51</b>	<b>43,533.15</b>
<b>Bank Balance at 31 March 2015</b>		
Unity Trust Account	<b>62,956.51</b>	

Mr S Smith  
Responsible Financial Officer  
Date: 14 April 2016



### **Working Party Representatives and Representatives to Outside Bodies 2015/2016**

- 1. Staffing Committee**  
Cllr P Waters (Chair), Cllr D Bailey
- 2. Pirton Sports and Social Club Committee**  
Mr S Smith (Chair), Mrs R Manders, Mr S Maple Cllr D Saunders, Cllr A Scott
- 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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