

WIDFORD

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH ELECTORATE

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Widford Parish Electorate
Tuesday 9th April 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

PRESENT: Parish councillors Mike Allen, twelve members of the public, CC Eric Buckmaster.

Cllr Mike Allen, being present and the Parish Council Chairman, presided.

Minutes taken by Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council.

1 The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

2 Apologies for absence

Julia Brown

3 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate, 4th April 2023 (AMPE)

It was **agreed** by those present that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Electorate held on 5th April 2022 were a true and accurate record. The Parish Chairman signed the Minutes.

4 Review of the year 2022/24 by Cllr Mike Allen, Chairman of the Parish Council

Thank you all for coming to the meeting.

The previous year has been interesting in the fact that there seemed to be relative tranquillity throughout but there were some notable events over the past year in the village and they are as follows;

1. Flooding especially along Abbotts lane. It followed the tarmacking over the drains which have now been cleared by local resident Andrew Blackshaw. I've recently driven down the lane following substantial rain and the drains are working well. However, the remaining water is now running down Abbotts Lane through to the Ware Road and down past the church where at times it is dangerous. This continues to be monitored.
2. Kings Coronation event – Aply supported by Kerry Holt, Julia Brown, Jill Buck, Brenda Morrison, Margaret and Hugh O'Reilly. The event was an outstanding success and thanks also goes to the village hall team for making appropriate arrangements to allow the day to go through into the evening with minimal fuss. A big thanks also goes to the local residents who turned out for the event to make it so memorable.
3. RAAC – September and return to school term arrived with a bombshell announcement that reinforced aerated autoclaved concrete was desperately dangerous and many schools required to either wholly shut down or make emergency choices on how to operate with significantly reduced facilities. Widford School's section of RAAC had been dealt with and was in a safe situation.
4. Dogs – there have been many incidents over the past year with dogs at the centre. The issues have been fouling, barking and nuisance behaviour through to biting. In each of the instances the activity was raised to the associated authorities and listed on social media to ensure all residents have an understanding of location and incident. For the responsible dog owners who generally abide by the rules, thank you.
5. Christopher Taylor-Young – long term village resident, good friend to many and staunch advocate for the village archive. Christopher was always one for a comment or two and was always in support of village events and activities. We wish his family all the very best at this difficult time.
6. Widford School – a merger is being proposed by the education authority to bring Widford school into the Hunsdon Primary schools authority. The idea being that the youngest attend Widford and the older to Hunsdon. We await the update with anticipation.

Other events that happened through the year within the village:

- Elections – addition of Josh Warren and leaving of Babs Edwards
- Coronation bench installed at bus stop 16/04/23
- Coronation cups were eventually received by the manufacturer and delivered to the children of the village
- Clerk's health issues begin June 2023 returns to business January 2024
- Litter picking now within the PC's remit no longer supported by District Council

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- Directional defibrillator sign installed on Hunsdon Road
- Crime – Sep 23 nothing, Oct 23 nothing, Dec 23 theft from vehicle x 1, Feb 24 Attempted Burglary x 2, non-dwelling burglary x 1, vehicle interference x 1
- Allotment operating policy upgrade
- Allotment water supply – needs upgrading to mains potentially as although the sustainable system operates it requires an extraordinary amount of servicing to continue
- Leverage Lane application – rejected and now an appeal has been placed.
- Trees cut in the closed church yard.

And to conclude:

Thank you goes to our Clerk, Councillors including District and County along with the Village Hall team, Jo English and residents to continue to help make the village of Widford a great place to live.

5 Parish Groups reports

No reports were presented

6 Widford Relief in Need Charity report

Charity Hon Secretary Ian Brett reported that the two nominated trustees (Ian Brett and Tom Edwards) of the Widford Relief in Need Charity have now secured possession of the field known as Poors Land and have entered into a formal 7-year contract to lease the land to a local farmer. The lease is for £1,600 per annum, increased from £600. The Charity Commission has been asked to look at broadening the terms of the governing document to make it more appropriate. The Charity will keep the Parish Council informed of developments.

7 Rural Police report

The police did not present an annual report, but rather sent a report for March 2025 as follows:

ANSTEY: No reported crimes

HORMEAD: No reported crimes

BRENT PELHAM & MEESDEN: 1 x Criminal Damage

STOCKING PELHAM; No reported crimes

FURNEUX PELHAM: 1 X Theft of Motor Vehicle

ALBURY: 1 x Dangerous Dogs Act

LITTLE HADHAM: 1 X Theft From Motor Vehicle

MUCH HADHAM: 1 X Theft From Motor Vehicle

HUNSDON: No reported crimes

WIDFORD: 1 X Vehicle Interference

WARESIDE: 1 X Theft of Motor Vehicle

EASTWICK & GILSTON: 1 x Burglary

BRAUGHING: 1 X Criminal Damage

STANDON & PUCKERIDGE: 2 X Theft

Other news and updates:

Burglaries seem to be on the increase, this is dwelling and non dwelling, so please make sure you leave your properties secure and valuables are not left easily in view or accessible, Take down serial numbers and keep safe, mark your property with a marker pen or look on line for other methods of identifying your items, take photos of jewellery and upload to your email or the cloud so it can be accessed from any of your devices, if you just save it to a device and it is stolen so are your pictures.

Keyless car thefts nationally continue to be trending. On most makes of vehicle, keyless entry can be disabled. Alternatively, ensure car keys, particularly any spare keys, are secured in a signal blocking/Faraday pouch when not in use. Hiding the keys in a metal tin can also restrict the signal from vehicle keys.

Your local policing teams are continuing regular patrols in hotspot areas at key times.

Please continue to report suspicious vehicles that may be seen driving around in your area. If you are able to record the MAKE, COLOUR and REGISTRATION number of the vehicle, that would be very helpful.

Additional Crime Prevention Advice can be found via this link: <https://www.herts.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/>

The police also sent a leaflet advertising the new Herts Connected service that has replaced the OWL system. This is a free interactive messaging service from Hertfordshire Constabulary. It will enable people to get

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connected with what is happening in their local area, to keep up to date, and have their say in what goes on where they live or work in Hertfordshire which will help police identify priorities.

8 County and District Councillors' reports for the Annual Meeting of the Parish

Eric Buckmaster County Councillor Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Representing the Parishes of Sawbridgeworth, High Wych, Eastwick and Gilston, Stanstead Abbots, Hunsdon, Widford, Wareside. Cabinet Member for the Environment including Sustainable Hertfordshire, Waste Disposal, Recycling Centres, Lead Local Flood Authority, Countryside Rights of Way. Chair of Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Chair of Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Board. I also attend Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and Anglian Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Key priorities and programmes:

- ☑ Delivering the cross-Council Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy.
- ☑ Overview of the local flood risk management strategy and flood risk Mitigation and sustainable drainage via the planning system.
- ☑ The provision of timely, relevant and up-to-date advice related to the historic environment, sustainable drainage and ecology.
- ☑ To enhance the physical and natural environment of Hertfordshire through Countryside Management advice and action.
- ☑ To deliver volunteering programmes and Rights of Way improvement.
- ☑ To rebuild and grow the Health Walks programmes to address improved health and wellbeing for residents
- ☑ To ensure the effective management of Hertfordshire's waste
- ☑ To mobilise and manage new contracts for the disposal of the county's residual waste.
- ☑ Subject to national Government direction/amendments; To develop a response to the Resources & Waste Strategy and work closely with Waste Collection Authorities through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership to deliver resulting strategies and requirements.
- ☑ To manage the considerable pressure on waste services, in particular the provision of the Recycling Centre and future cost of waste disposal through a network of Transfer Stations.
- ☑ To develop a suitable network of Recycling Centres that are capable of meeting service demand.

Pishiobury park Countryside Rights of Way works with the Districts and Boroughs in producing Greenspace Action Plans. we have now developed a draft GAP, which is available for download from: [Pishiobury Park GAP 2024-2034 FINAL no maps \(onwebcurl.com\)](#) Vision Statement This plan will build on the successes of the last twenty years of management, which have brought the parkland into positive conservation management and dramatically improved visitor facilities. Our aspiration is to continue to restore and enhance Pishiobury Park's varied natural habitats and historic landscape, recognising the importance of the site's aging trees and promoting the future maturity of younger trees. Alongside this we will focus on celebrating the site's heritage, providing all visitors with a welcoming and accessible greenspace, and supporting the voluntary Friends of Pishiobury Park.

Local Nature Recovery Partnership I chair the board for the Local Nature Recovery Board for the partnership. A number of agencies have joined the steering group and Board, eg Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, Districts and Boroughs, Landowners, and Hertfordshire Association of Parish Councils. The Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership (HNRP or 'the Partnership') has been established by Hertfordshire County Council (the Responsible Authority - [Local nature recovery strategies: areas and responsible authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) in order to deliver Hertfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The Partnership includes a wide range of stakeholders from across public, private and charity/voluntary sectors to ensure a diversity of voices are heard and a circumspect approach is followed in creating the LNRS.

- The Partnership will map the most valuable existing areas for nature across Hertfordshire and areas where the greatest opportunities are available for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits.
- Develop nature recovery priorities for Hertfordshire and establish and prioritise practical actions and projects (and their locations) that will help deliver these priorities.
- Carry out engagement with wider stakeholder groups, facilitating a comprehensive and widespread involvement in the LNRS process within Hertfordshire and coordinating with neighbouring LNRS delivery partnerships to ensure a joined-up approach at the county borders.
- Develop the final LNRS and any related outputs including but not limited to documents, webpages and software.
- Review the LNRS when requested by the Secretary of State and map where nature recovery action has been taken.

The Partnership will be comprised of the following groups: a Board, a Steering Group and several Task and Finish

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groups. Mapping will identify the most valuable existing areas for nature, Nature reserves – SSSIs places with designations, areas of greatest potential for creating valuable habitats through creating or improving habitats – buffer zones to habitats, links between habitats, poorly managed sites. Where creation or improvement of habitat could deliver wider environmental benefits (including air and water quality, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration and renewable siting). – flood plans, any green space.

Through mapping these areas we will also identify areas valuable habitat could be increased and where there is potential for joining up isolated sites. We also hope to map where habitats can deliver health and well-being benefits too for instance improving access to green space. Will integrate with Biodiversity Net Gain work.

Sites of 'strategic significance' will be identified. Developers will be incentivised to deliver BNG in these sites by receiving an uplift for BNG in these zones. To complete this mapping, data will be used from a wide range of stakeholders to ensure we have the accurate and comprehensive view of county.

Engagement will start by spring of next year, then draft mapping, wider engagement, public consultation then publishing.

Your Tree our future-Tree Giveaway

Tree numbers

The original scheme design was to fund 10,000 trees in year 1 and 30,000 in each of the subsequent three years (100,000 total). As a result of financial contributions from partner councils YTOF has delivered significantly more trees than the original targets. Approximately 47,000 trees were collected in year 1 and 75,000 in year 2. The first two years of YTOF has delivered 205% more trees than planned for the period at a cost to the county council of 57% of the budget awarded for the period.

Hertfordshire County Council has an ambition to support the planting of 1.2m new trees – and 100km of hedgerow – in the county by 2030. So far, since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019, the council had planted – "or enabled the planting of" – 324,647 trees.

Air Quality along with District Councils the County Council has a public health role in air quality. In February we held our annual air quality conference for County and District Councillors. A number of campaigns have focussed on behaviour change especially in discouraging use of wood burning stoves, which produce considerable particulates, and discouraging engine idling. Banners have been produced which can be displayed outside schools.

Recycling Centres. In 2023 Essex County Council formally introduced a residents only policy along with most surrounding Local Authorities. At the same time in Hertfordshire we were receiving a net 20pc of waste from residents across our borders including in Bishops Stortford and Royston. I therefore agreed to consider residents only in Hertfordshire as long as we engaged with neighbouring councils to discuss mutual access. Most of the councils declined however we have agreed arrangements with Essex and Cambridgeshire. We are therefore able to continue to access Harlow Recycling Centre and residents of Essex and Cambridgeshire may access Bishops Stortford and Royston through showing ID or a permit. We opened a new supersite Recycling Centre in Welwyn Garden City and we are starting work on a new waste transfer station in Ware, and there will be investment in existing RCs including Bishops Stortford. For Waste Disposal, what is left after all the Recycling from the Districts and Boroughs are new contracts starting now send everything to Energy Recovery, so nothing to landfill.

Hertfordshire has the highest Recycling rate in the region.

Herts Waste Partnership We continue to respond to the Governments Waste and Resources Strategy on elements of the new arrangements for Extended Producer Responsibility, where producers pay for the costs associated with waste disposal and Recycling for the packaging the produce as well as the much delayed Deposit Return Scheme. I have also lobbied the Sentencing Council for higher and consistent penalties for flytipping. Also to ensure that fines issued in court are at least equivalent to fixed penalty notices issued by the Local Authorities.

Local Flooding. The causes of flooding are various and there is no single agency responsible. The past 12 months has seen heavy rainfall, with various and significant forms of flooding in Sawbridgeworth, Eastwick and Gilston, Hunsdon, and Stanstead Abbots. The causes are all different and I have worked with the Parish Councils and the Agencies responsible for undertaking the work and/or Investigations.

Hunsdon High Street: Flooding has been a problem for many years including into resident's homes. Thames Water and Ringway have undertaken investigations and jetting. Work is underway with County Lead Local Flood Authority officers towards a long-term solution. Funding was secured for mapping and options work. Our Lead Local Flood Authority Officer is talking with the landowner, Places for People, and sharing information about the preferred options following the recent consultants work. The output from the Optioneering has been shared with residents and includes a number of ponds to hold back and slowly release the surface water with supporting infrastructure. The solution would need substantial funding and officers will continue to seek grants from Environment Agency as opportunities arise.

Stanstead Abbots: The village centre at the bottom of a hill (Roydon Road) and near an Environment Agency watercourse makes the village vulnerable to flooding which has occurred on many occasions. Working with the parish council the Environment Agency has responded with providing a number of properties with funding for Property Flood Protection Measures. They also continue to consider possible natural flood management on higher

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ground in order to hold back water. The Parish feels that the EA should undertake some dredging of the ditch to increase the flow however EA has cited environmental reasons for not wanting to do this.

Eastwick and Gilston. There are a number of places where substantial flooding is occurring in the villages due to what can only be described as poor stewardship of the landowner, notably Places for People. As an example Gilston Lane, where lack of maintenance to Fiddlers Brook and vegetation restricts the flow of water, which floods and degrades the Lane and threatens properties. After much delay and pushing, Places for People have engaged with the Environment Agency for approval to undertake work. I have put carriageway work in my reserve highways list for work in the 2025/26 financial year assuming the maintenance work has been concluded by later this year. Eastwick Hall Lane is also undermined by water running off fields and heavy farm vehicles. Along With District Councillor John Dunlop and the Parish we have been seeking a meeting with relevant parties, including PFP land managers Knight Frank to find a solution.

Sawbridgeworth: The significant and persistent flooding has been along the A1184, by Rowney Gardens, Junction with West Road, Parsonage Lane, and Spellbrook layby. Work has now been undertaken through jetting by Ringway on West Road and Parsonage Lane which have now coped with the recent wet weather. We also worked hard to get Thames Water to clear the surface water drains near Pishiobury Drive which had filled with material and block the water run-off. Likewise the main road has coped with the weather. Spellbrook is flooded through run-off from the fields. I have asked Ringway to take another look. I have also requested more frequent gully clearing owing to the silt that comes off the fields.

Prevention is key in many cases. I have Asked East Herts to consider more frequent street cleansing in areas where flooding has occurred in order to keep gullies clear, and I am asking County to look at a more proactive approach to escalating problems to other agencies such as Thames Water, Landowners, and the Environment Agency where the solution is potentially in their remit.

Speed and 20mph Following the implementation of the 20mph area in central Sawbridgeworth I have responded to residents requests to consider both statutory and advisory reduced speed limits in appropriate areas.

Sawbridgeworth North East: Statutory consultation has taken place. I'll discuss responses with officers once work is completed.

Sawbridgeworth West: speed and volumes studies completed. Next Stage Public Engagement to seek views.

Stanstead Abbots and St Margaret: Area wide Statutory consultation concluded. This scheme is centrally funded and in order to include Roydon Road and Hoddesdon Road then traffic calming was included since signage wouldn't be sufficient on its own. Just a few objections received and have tended to focus on the traffic calming. Once the reports are available I'll discuss options with officers but indications are this scheme will proceed.

Hunsdon: Speed and volume studies have been undertaken and there are further to come. My intention is to introduce an advisory 20mph limit at Hunsdon school and also on Acorn Street with improved signage for safety.

High Wych: An Advisory 20mph sign has been installed at the school operating at school drop off and pick up. Road and footway condition and resurfacing and parking

£80m will be spent on highways and transport, including the continuation of the two-year £7.9m revenue funding for highways network improvements, with a focus on vegetation clearing, sign cleaning, litter clearance, drainage and footway patching.

£19m of additional capital investment in highways maintenance over the next two years to fix and protect Hertfordshire's roads.

There are various categories of work on the highway. The Highways fault reporting portal is the first port of call for all highways related faults. Potholes are assessed then if requiring action will be programmed. The response time can be up to 20 days. Gullies are cleared on a cyclical maintenance regime to deal with gullies across an area. I have a Highways locality budget of £90k per annum which I can allocate to road and footway resurfacing, Highways schemes such as double yellow line, speed and volume studies, traffic regulation orders such as the No Entry at Sheering Mill Lane, and Double Yellow Lines at parking hotspots on junctions and to deter pavement parking. I have a number of Public Engagement Consultations underway currently around Sawbridgeworth. I am also resurfacing part of West Road following the two housing developments. There are also Integrated Works which are longer term planned schemes. The A1184 between Harlow and Brook Road has recently been repaired ahead of resurfacing in a couple of months time.

Most streetworks on the Highway are utility companies who as statutory undertakers can work on the roads in an emergency and must notify County Network Management within two hours of starting. This isn't always done on time, and I can report utilities who can send an inspector and can issue fines.

My Locality Grant for the past 3 years every county councillor has had a grant pot to award to local good causes. During the two Covid years this was increased to £15,000. Owing to budget challenges our grant pots for 2024/25 has been reduced to £5,000. During 2023/24 I have awarded over 30 grants to organisations for just under £9,500. The balance will carry over to the next financial year.

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Applicant organisation	amount requested	Purpose	amount agreed
High Wych Parochial Parish Council	300	portaloos for community event	£300.00
Hunsdon JMI School, High Street, Hunsdon	300	coronation event	£300.00
Spellbrook school	250	Wormery and Composting area	£250.00
Bobtails Playgroup & Teddyclub	250	equipment	£250.00
309 Sawbridgeworth Air cadets	500	additional uniforms	£500.00
Sawbridgeworth Town Twinning Association	250	towards Commemorative photo book for 50th Anniversary of Town Twinning with Moosburg and Bry sur Marne	£250.00
Wellbeing Centre	120	prize giving event for participants in Wellbeing Yellow Book arts project	£120.00
Stanstead Abbots Brownies	550	coach for trip to London	£550.00
Keech hospice care	300	supports children & their families	£300.00
Carers in Herts	300	carers in Herts	£300.00
Herts Inclusive Theatre	300	cultural activities for SEN	£300.00
Essex and Herts air ambulance trust	300	Air Ambulance	£300.00
Sawbridgeworth Local History Society	300	developing website for accessibility	£300.00
<u>Hertfordshire Boat rescue</u>	500	training and rescue on waterways	£500.00
Leventhorpe School all weather pitch contribution	400	towards AstroTurf pitch to a floodlit 3G artificial grass pitch	£400.00
ASPECTS	300	family support for children aged 5-19 who attend our partner schools in Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and nearby villages.	£300.00
Jimmys Toddler Group at High Wych Parish Hall	350	toddler tables and chairs for craft activities and snack time	£350.00
Hunsdon Squirrels (Scouts)	256	flag for events such as Remembrance Sunday & St Georges	£256.00
Sawbridgeworth Town Council on behalf of community groups	200	booklet for local support services	£200.00
Wareside Parish Council	400	contribution to community notice board	£400.00
Bobtails nursery	400	towards replacing floor	£400.00
Hertfordshire Libraries		towards multicultural, participatory dance theatre piece for children and families	£125.00
Hertfordshire CC		speed and volume survey for Cambridge Road Spellbrook	£275.00
Secret Space		yoga classes in Stanstead Abbots.	£250.00
Sawbridgeworth Guides		Tent for young leaders	£200.00
Ore Projects		Mentoring scheme which provided free hands-on classes in metalwork for 16-25 year olds.	£250.00
CHIPS		playschemes and clubs for children with additional needs (SEN)	£200.00
Isabel Hospice		support for their ongoing work	£300.00
Bishop's Stortford Child Contact Centre		Our Child Contact Centre, supporting families	£300.00
Sawbridgeworth Angling Society		Build the two platforms which will enable our members with disabilities to fish safely.	£300.00

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1st Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Scout Group		Treatment of trees around scouts hut building to keep users safe	£300.00
		Running Total	£9,326.00
		amount remaining	£674.00

Further to his written report, Cllr Buckmaster drew attention to the ongoing discussions regarding the best way forward in creating a federation of the Widford and Hunsdon schools, particularly with the practical issues surrounding travel between the two schools especially for families with a child at each school.

Cllr Eric Buckmaster April 2024

8 Open Forum

The following concerns were raised:

There have been a number of thefts in the area in the last few weeks. PCSO Leon De Bruyn to be asked for information on what regular police patrols can be arranged.

It was commented that a policy dealing with increased light pollution over the last few years could have the effect that reduced street lighting would lead to an increase in crime that would not be generally supported.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.42pm.

Signed.....Dated.....

