

The Annual Meeting of the Parish commenced at 8.05pm on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 following an Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council.

#### PRESENT

Chairman D Ian Brett, Vice Chairman Mrs Jill Buck, Councillors Mrs Wendy Camp, Mrs Frances Luck , Mrs Jenny Miller and the Clerk.  
CC Roger Beeching, District Councillor Mr Mike Newman and 7 members of the public,

The Chairman welcomed all present before opening the meeting.

#### REPORT ON THE YEARS PROCEEDINGS

IB In his report, Dr Ian Brett said during his nine years of service, this is the most in touch Council and we all work well together. We are very pleased to be joined at our by-monthly meetings by CC Dr Roger Beeching and DC Mr Mike Newman whose work is very much valued , this year especially with financial assistance in producing our new Village Sign. Funding for the sign did not affect the Council's precept due also to the generous help of village families for which we are very grateful.

We are also grateful to our village artist, Bruce McNally for his design of the sign and his artistic contributions to Widford during the last ten years.

The Allotment Committee is now Chaired by Mrs Jenny Miller and from annual fees of the allotment holders, we have a Grounds' Keeper to maintain the common areas. There are some plots available.

Parish Paths Partnership is now in hands of Groundwork Hertfordshire but our long serving Rights of Way Officer ,Nicholas Maddex has now been delegated to additional territory. This year has been uneventful except for the rapid deterioration of Lilley Bridge (Fp 18).We are concerned that the urgent action we have asked for two years is still outstanding and our fear is that work will now be a potentially difficult and expensive project instead of a relatively cheap and easy repair.

Given the poor weather on 2<sup>nd</sup> June ,Village Celebrations for Her Majesty the Queens' 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee were considered a reasonable success ,self funding by reason of a small fee for each adult attending, families for donating lots , a grant from East Herts Council and a hugely successful Auction of Promises. The Village sign mentioned earlier was put in place to celebrate the Jubilee and was installed on 30<sup>th</sup> September with the assistance of our Oldest resident, Bill Livings and one of our Youngest members, Rose Sullivan.

With a lunch given in July, attended by all the Councillors, CC Roger Beeching, DC Mike Newman together with their spouses, we celebrated our Clerk, Beryl Hollylee's forty years of service to this Council and to the wider community. Letters of congratulation were received from the Leaders of Hertfordshire County Council, District Council and Mark Prisk MP.

With the new District Plan not yet in place we do not know how the allocation of houses will fall. It is likely that small villages such as Widford may be asked to accept 10% new dwellings on our current stock over the next twenty years to 2031, amounting to about 20 houses.Our Parish Plan makes it clear that the majority of our residents would be comfortable with this level of growth. Our School, Playing Field ,Village Hall and Community needs new young families. Under the Government' Housing Grant Scheme the Village will receive financial support for each new available residence and such funds received, which may be quite significant, will be used for Capital projects that will benefit this community.

We are sad to say farewell to Helen and Phillip Giles removing to Cambridge. Helen was founding member and leader of WOW and we wish her well and thank her for all her enthusiasm and hard work.

Finally my thanks for all their help and support of my fellow Councillors and to our hard working Clerk. A past Chairman told me long ago this is a thankless task.! It is certainly a very frustrating one. Despite the claims of Central Government to devolve some authority to grass roots level (localism) , the influence of Parish Councils is very small and on occasions, the expectations of local people can be unrealistic. There are times when a great deal of

effort is expended but little achieved, then every now and again, I do think we do something worthwhile – I rather like the Village Sign. So I guess we'll soldier on'. Thank you.

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#### REPORT ON POLICE MATTERS

MN From now on, it has been agreed that a summary of Police relationship with Parish Councils will be dealt with by our District Councillor.

Notes from the Locality meeting on 6 February held in Hunsdon Village Hall had been received. The meetings held every six months allowing discourse between Police and Parish Councils, although helpful have irregular attendances. Different venues may be arranged the cost of which could be borne by the District Council for hire of a hall. Police should report to the Parish Councils and in reverse. Crime figures are low. Our current PSSOs are Karen Bal and Nicola Hunt.

Police are concerned about communication with people and may ask to have items included in the Parish Magazine.

Inspector Chris Hunt heads the Sawbridgeworth Rural Police Team.

#### HERTFORDSHIRE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

JB Following the success of the events of the Diamond Jubilee and the enthusiasm of the public, further thought will be given to this project this year subject to response for helpers. Councillor Mrs Buck will contact members of the public and report back on responses received.

#### REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR Mr Mike Newman

MN He was pleased to present this, his third report as District Councillor.

Staff changes have taken place, there have been departmental re-organisations and 'slimming down' of the organisation. Opportunities for 'sharing services' with adjoining Local Authorities continue to be explored to reduce costs and to compensate for the fall from Central Government. It is hoped this will not have any significant impact on services to residents,

He has attended all but one of the formal Council meetings at which he would be expected together with many others in connection with the role of District Councillor for which he has received the standard allowances but has made no other claims.

The District Plan – East Herts Council now has a legal responsibility to provide housing for a growing population, and if the Plan does not do so using a process that central Government confirms is 'sound', it will be sent back until the centre is satisfied. Draconian as this may sound, it must be better than a regional assembly in Bury St. Edmunds determining our fate! The plan is to address the provision of housing in the period up to 2031. In the meantime The Council will not build any itself - that will be done by the private sector responding to supply and demand.

For the time being the 2007 plan must suffice but with the legal requirement that increasingly as that plan ages, the provision of the National Planning Policy Framework should be taken in to account in determining planning applications. So recent steps taken have been to assess the 2007 Plan against the NPPF to see what that means in practice and this identified 8 shortcomings. This could lead to developers seeing these as gaps to be exploited, and try to push through major schemes, so clearly it is imperative to complete the District Plan as soon as possible.

Being actively engaged in development of the District Plan he would be happy to provide more detail if requested.

In conclusion two current short list options are:-

- a) Villages – proposition that most of the Cat.1 and 2 villages (inc: Widford) would grow by 10% - his expectation is that this will be the preferred option.

- b) Harlow North – proposition for up to 10,000 homes between Widford and Harlow. This is still on the cards. The most recent view is that “Up to 2021 the District Plan can be delivered at relatively small-scale urban extensions and sites within the built-up areas of the towns and villages. However, the period between 2021 – 2031 will require one or more large urban extensions to come forward. “ Notably this excludes the possibility of any new settlement, and detailed assessment of Harlow North acknowledges that the Stort Valley precludes it ever effectively being part of the existing town, So if it can be excluded as an extension of Harlow and as a self contained new settlement, then perhaps sense might prevail even in the long term.

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Council Tax - East Herts Council was rewarded by Central Government by a further grant of 1% by freezing Council Tax for another year. As a result, the Council took the decision to keep its spending plans at the level it had anticipated and to reduce overall Council Tax (including County Council and Police) by 1% for the coming year.

Waste collection and recycling is to be changed to accommodate the increase and type of cardboard associated with internet ordering and delivery. Various options are being considered by all the Councils in the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and currently the favoured one is to provide a third wheeled bin for all recycable solids (plastic, card, cans etc but with the exception of paper) and in place of the two boxes.

Community grants for both revenue and capital issues continue to be available from EH Council but have to be applied for, so the message to all village organisation is one of encouragement to ask whether any grant funding may be available, and I would of course, be happy to facilitate any such enquiry.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DR ROGER BEECHING gave a review of the year 2012-2013.

RB As I am coming to the end of my four year term as your representative on the County Council for Division 24, I thought I would give you an overview of the work I have been involved in on your and the communities behalf.

It was a steep learning curve as the work with the County Council was very different from other layers of Local Government.

I have tried to attend all Town and five Parishes meetings allowing for Diary clashes, when I have given an update on various initiatives from County Council departments.

I have been able to distribute £40,000 in Locality Budget grants to good causes to enhance the well being of the community and group benefitting from it. I estimate I have distributed 70 to 80 of these grants spread between preschool groups, old age pensioner clubs, sports clubs, educational groups and aesthetic improvements to our communities.

The Highway Locality Budget has been in operation for one year and £90,000 is available. £60,000 of this has gone to road issues and I have prioritised and allocated as fairly and evenly as possible across my Division. The other £30,000 has been spent on minor improvements (that is cheaper) landscape issues, health and safety with signs and lining, gully cleaning, weed clearing and untidy areas. Reinforcing road markings at dangerous junctions and consultations as to what residents want in their particular areas. I have also had my casework load from residents who need help in finding their way through the bureaucracy they find themselves caught up in. This is particularly difficult in the area of health and social services where support and finance seem to be at odds sometimes. Other areas in which I have been involved include schools admissions, bus routes, footpath changes, housing problems and planning issues. There are others but that is probably enough!

I have served on the Education and Skills Cabinet Panel, Health and adult Care Cabinet, Health Scrutiny Committee, Health Monitoring Recommendations Topic Group. I have Chaired various Scrutiny Panels on subjects as diverse as Maternity Services in Hospitals, Returning Servicemen, Adoption systems, safeguarding the elderly in Hospitals and Care

Homes and quality of care at the end of life and more. I am also a member of the Standards committee ensuring Councillors are acting in accordance with a Code of Conduct and Ethical Behaviour.

I am standing for re-election in May and I see tasks to follow through are scrutiny recommended already made, scrutiny of the new systems for health and ensuring they are of a good quality and efficient in action and centred round the patient. To ensure the new Health and Well being Boards are carrying out their remit successfully, to keep Council Taxes down while keeping the quality of service as we would all want, to continue to put money into our road system. To improve the surfaces and safety features, to continue to pressurise to have the rural Broad band service upgraded, to cut where possible bureaucracy and petty officialdom and make sure the officers are approachable and helpful via a well run, smoothly operating call centre.

Dr Beeching thanked everyone for listening and hoped for support at the forthcoming election.

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#### VICE CHAIRMANS' REMARKS

JB Mrs Buck thanked the Chairman for his good and full report, hard work and diligence in shepherding the group ( Councillors).  
It has been a special year – the Clerk, reaching 40 years of service to the Council and we hope she will continue.  
People did enjoy the Jubilee celebrations and the get together to do the work. We feel encouraged to ask if there is any interest in the village to enable Widford to enter the Village of the Year competition in June.  
In conclusion, the Vice-Chairman thanked all the Councillors for their support.

#### QUESTION TIME

Neither the Chairman or Clerk had received any letters of request for discussion at this meeting of any particular interest.

From the floor, a local farmer asked what could be done if Gypsies camp on their fields? It appears this question arose as a result of a meeting at Eastwick and there is nothing that can be done until they are in place.

The possibility of a future site adjacent to Abbots Lane was recalled .It had been a suggestion in a study several years ago, but it had also been suggested that this site would not be acceptable and that Widford was considered an unlikely village for this purpose.

Public Inquiry re Footpath 17 .

To establish whether or not it was legal to have a public footpath pass through consecrated land. The land in question is the Church path leading to a public footpath at the rear of the Church and which members of the public have always been free to walk.

The representative who will be attending on behalf of the Church invited anyone to join him at the meeting although it was unlikely they would be invited to speak.!

Artists success.

Anthony Cleyndert was congratulated on his success at the recent Art Exhibition. He was unaware until the Chairman told him at this meeting ,that his work had been bought to be hung in the Village Hall.

There was no more business and the Chairman thanked everyone for coming and thanked everyone for their reports.

The next meeting is the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman.....  
Dr Ian Brett,

Date.....7<sup>th</sup> May 2013.....