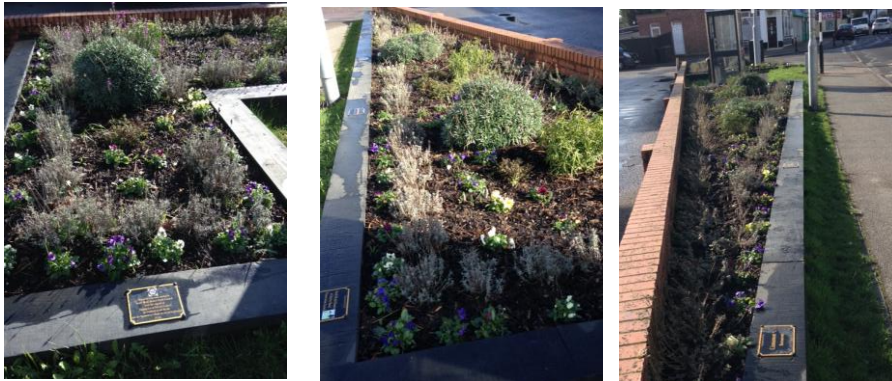


**NORTH WEALD BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2016 - 2017**

ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

GARDEN BY THE PARADE OF SHOPS



This year the Parish Council has been instrumental in achieving the new Garden by the Parade of Shops in North Weald, with the hard work of Councillor Buckley, Vice Chairman of the Council and assisted by Cllr George Mulliner, Chairman of the Environmental Committee. With an able team of volunteers, the garden is thriving.

BULB PLANTING

Bulb Planting was once again carried out within the Parish. Cllr Hawkins, Chairman of the Parish Council, and his team of Councillor's concentrated mainly on areas within North Weald this year, however it is understood that there will be an emphasis on Hastingwood and Thornwood Common this coming year. Liaison with Epping Forest District Council was also carried out for



Bulbs to be planted adjacent to the Talbot Roundabout after several years of negotiations.

HASTINGWOOD VILLAGE HALL



This year, the 1st phase of the works to the Hastingwood Village Hall was completed. This has enabled the provision of both the disabled toilet, to upgrade the existing toilets and to give a re-vamp to the Hall. The Parish Council has provided grant funding and help and expertise to the Trustees who have done a fantastic job in completing this phase of the project.

ENVIRONMENT

Play Areas - continued to maintain and refurbish the play equipment on three Play Areas - Weald Common, Memorial Playing Field and Thornwood Common. We have removed the old wooden play area at Weald Common due to increased vandalism and ongoing maintenance costs. We continue to undertake weekly inspections of the play equipment and arrange for quarterly inspections by an external specialist.

Grounds Maintenance

Managed the grass cutting, other grounds maintenance, and maintained the open spaces in areas that the Parish Council has responsibility for, which includes:

Thornwood Common Field, Thornwood Common Nature Area, Mill Street Common, Pike Way Open Space, Bluemans End Recreation Ground, Village Green North Weald High Road, PC Owned Land at Weald Common, Parish Council Cemetery, Allotments at Wheelers Farm Gardens, Queens Road, Thornwood Common, Hastingwood A & B Sites.



Allotments - managed and maintained five allotment sites for use by the public.

This year, Queens Road site has been hit by a very nasty Sewerage Leak and we are doing everything we can to liaise with Thames Water to try to remedy the situation. It was only with the quick thinking of one of the plot holders and the use of social media that the word was spread to other plot holders in double quick time. We continue to provide Allotment Wardens with their own Budgets to manage the sites thereby ensuring that allotment holders have a say in what is needed on each site.

This year we say goodbye to Lisa Harman, Allotment Warden for the Wheelers Farm Gardens and Queens Road Site. Lisa has been a stalwart as the Warden and was instrumental in setting up the 'chicken gang' - we wish her well in her endeavors, and thank her for her support over the years.

Christmas Trees – as well as lighting the Christmas Tree in North Weald on the Green adjacent to the High Road, the Parish Hall at Thornwood Management Committee also arranged the lighting of a Christmas Tree and an interactive Carol Service at the Parish Hall during the Festive Season. This was attended by more than 100 residents and was a huge success. Mince pies and mulled wines were also served.

CCTV

Installed CCTV at the Parade of Shops in North Weald. Have agreed to be responsible for the Maintenance of the CCTV Installation at the Weald Common Play Area – the funding for the CCTV having been raised by the **North Weald Mums**.

Litter - ensured that the play areas are regularly litter-picked throughout the year. In addition, arranged for regular fly tipping and other waste (that can cause a hazard to residents and wildlife) removal in the Parish, including 'hotspots' such as Church Lane, Vicarage Lane and Threshers Bush.

Graffiti Removal - removed graffiti wherever possible in the Parish as soon as possible, and reported graffiti to other authorities on non Parish owned property.

NORTH WEALD BASSETT CEMETERY

Plots - Arranged and supervised interments in both the Lawn Cemetery and the Cremated Remains Section.

Health and Safety - continued the comprehensive audit of all memorials to ensure health and safety standards are maintained and continued to review and implement operational health and safety improvements.

Code of Practice - continued to ensure that all work undertaken by stonemasons in the Cemetery adheres to the BRAMM Code of Practice.

Utilising - Electronic Software for Burial Records and Mapping.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Meetings - held a total of 11 full Council meetings to consider matters that affect the general well-being of the Parish.

Library – Continued to run the Library in North Weald on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays – 9.15pm – 1.15pm

Public Enquiries - dealt with over 5,000 public callers and enquiries at the Parish Council Offices and Library.

Recycling Bags Outlet - continued to make recycling bags available to the public from the Parish Council Offices.

Website – continued to work on upgrading a new, customer friendly website.

Social Media – Continued to promote the use of Social Media, such as Twitter and Facebook as a means of communicating with Local Residents - a continued work in progress.

Influencing Other Local Councils - continued to influence responsible authorities, and campaigning on behalf of the community for them to improve local services. For example: Highway maintenance and safety, Environmental services, and public safety.

Consultation Exercises - considered and responded to, where appropriate, a wide range of consultation exercises undertaken by other organisations/agencies on key issues affecting the local community.

Key Community Issues – continued to liaise with a number of institutions, and campaign on behalf of the local community on several relevant issues.

Community Facilities - continued to support the Parish Hall at Thornwood Committee who run the Parish Hall at Thornwood Common on an efficient and effective basis as a Community Asset for the Parish, and to liaise with other local Village Halls / facilities in the Parish on a partnership basis, always being ready to provide details of these facilities for those people who enquire.

Highway Maintenance & Safety - continued to communicate, primarily with Essex County Council-Highways to increase the level of highway maintenance and improvements in the Parish. At Parish Council meetings, regularly considered the issues and actions arising from the County Council's Highways Panel meetings. Update the Highways List on a weekly basis

Community Safety - continued to promote community safety in the Parish in several ways, including:

- Lobbied Essex Police regarding anti-social behaviour ensuring that the local policing team covered Halloween and November 5th
- Continuing to promote the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes by agreeing to have posters affixed to Parish Council Street Lights advertising the scheme and the provision of some grant funding towards the scheme
- **Notice Boards** – continued to update the eleven notice boards throughout the Parish on a bi-monthly basis to ensure that the community is kept well-informed on the issues that affect the entire community.
- **Newsletters** – contributed to the monthly Newsletter - **Village Life** - which included
 - **Councillor Contact Details** - continued to make Councillors' contact details available to the public by inclusion in every edition of the newsletter
 - **Council Meeting Dates** - continued to make the public aware (through the newsletter and the Council Handout of Council and Planning Committee meeting dates throughout the year.
- **Councillors** – 2 or 3 Councillors being available Monday, Wednesday & Friday Mornings between 10am and 12noon for Residents queries.

Remembrance Sunday - continued to organise the Annual Remembrance Day Service and Wreath Laying at the Debt of Honour, with over 400 people in attendance at the Norwegian Memorial and also the Remembrance Day Lunch. Once again, this year the Parish Council assisted with the organisation of the service at the Parish War Memorial and St Andrews Church on behalf of the Royal British Legion.



PLANNING

Community Information – regularly kept the community informed about local planning applications, including bi monthly updates on the Parish Council website and notice boards.

Epping Forest District Council Local Plan – ensured that the local community were kept up to date and clearly informed by communicating the District Council's future development proposals for the District and for the area. Kept local groups and residents informed as to what the Local Plan and respective Consultation documents were, and what they mean for our community specifically. The Parish Council attended three events in relation to the Local Plan where individuals could voice their opinions, ask questions, and complete relevant questionnaires, and jointly with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group created and organised the circulation of information in relation to the Local plan which was then delivered to all homes in the Parish. Following this the Parish Council compiled and delivered a comprehensive response to Epping Forest District Council the relevant authority on the residents behalf.

Neighbourhood Plan – Set up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Actively engaged with Epping Forest District Council to ensure the whole of the Parish was included in the designated area. **Council commissioned a report from a professional and independent body to critically examine the conclusions of the District Council Local Plan document.**

Neighbours' Views - actively encouraged the community to copy their objection/support letters to the Parish Council and attend Planning Committee meetings to express their views on local applications.

Meetings - held a total of **20** meetings to consider planning applications.

Planning Applications - commented on a total of **118** planning applications directly relating to the Parish.

Preventing Undesirable Developments - the Parish Council's comments have been instrumental in the District Council refusing planning permission for a number of unsuitable building proposals.

Supporting Improvements - supported a number of planning applications which, we believe, represented an improvement to the environment, and ensured the continued sustainability of the Parish.

Validation of Planning Applications - made a number of representations to try to ensure that all planning applications in North Weald Bassett have been through the appropriate checks at the District Council before they are submitted to the Parish Council for consideration as a statutory consultee.

Planning & District Development Committees - continued to participate in the external Statutory Planning Committees and District Development Committees which give Residents the opportunity of voicing their concerns to the District Council.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

Policies and Procedures – kept under review and introduced new Parish Council processes, policies and procedures to ensure efficient and effective service provision.

Health and Safety - continued to implement a range of health and safety policies and procedures to ensure that health and safety responsibilities are met.

Standing Orders – continuing to update both Standing Orders & Financial Regulations to reflect National Association of Local Councils advised best practice.

Best Value - reviewed operational costs associated with insurance and banking arrangements to ensure value for money.

Remuneration Scheme - reviewed the Parish Council's current Remuneration Scheme for Councillors, and agreed that this Council, once again, did not wish to operate a remuneration (allowance) scheme for Councillors.

Financial Accounts - ensured that the Parish Council's financial accounts are the subject of regular Internal Audit, by a Qualified Auditor and an External Audit throughout the year.

FINANCE

Clearly there is a cost involved in running your Parish Council. Parish Councillors are convinced that with their careful scrutiny of expenditure, this ensures that the local taxpayers receive good value for money. The Parish Council's precept for 2016/2017 was **£172,034**.

The Parish Council precept (which is the equivalent of only 75p per week per band D property) amounts to roughly 4% of your total Council Tax bill for the year (£1,567.92 for a band D property).

It must also be remembered that local taxpayers meet all of the Parish Council's precept whereas District Council and County Council expenditure is offset by Central Government funding.

North Weald Bassett Parish Council	Precept request	
	2016 / 2017 £ thousands	2017 / 2018 £ thousands
Leisure / recreation	£20,203	£19,410
Community Services	£40,405	£53,151
Administration	£103,111	£115,803
Other	£18,856	£21,994
Less use of Balances	£0	-£ 27,856
Expenditure Requirement	£182,575	£182,502
Less Local Council Tax Support Grant	-£10,541	-£7,027
Precept	£172,034	£175,475

On average across the district for every £1 of Council Tax you pay the money is shared in the following way:

*Essex County Council - 72%
Essex Police and Crime Commissioner - 10%
Essex Fire Authority - 4%
Epping Forest District Council - 10%
Town and Parish Councils - 4%*

For further details regarding the Parish Council accounts, visit www.northweald-pc.gov.uk and click on the 'Financial' tab. Alternatively, please contact the Parish Office for more detailed information.

**Cllr Cyril Hawkins
Chairman**