

BUSINESS PLAN

2016 – 2021

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Parish Council Business Plan?

It is a statement of the Council's vision for the Parish, detailing purpose, values, objectives and key priorities.

The statement details in a document what the Parish Council itself feels it can achieve either on its own or in partnership with other authorities such as the District and County Councils by trying to increase its influence over these bodies.

The aim of the Business Plan is to give North Weald Bassett residents a clear understanding of what the Parish Council is endeavouring to achieve and how it intends to deliver this. This Business Plan sets out for Councillors, Staff and all the Community our mission, purpose and priorities for the next five years. It also details what the Parish Council intends to focus on over the next five years.

The Business Plan will be regularly reviewed and the Plan will influence the direction and content of all other strategies and resources of the Council particularly through the budget process.

The Plan ensures that the Council can take a planned, organised and consistent approach to:

- Ensuring efficient design and delivery of Council services
- Achieving Value for Money and Best Practice
- Strive to achieve the identification of improved facilities and services
- To prioritise and allocate resources

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

North Weald Bassett Parish Council was formed in 1894 under the Parish Council Act and has three wards - Hastingwood, Thornwood Common and Village (North Weald).

The three wards are served by a total of 15 Councillors, some who are elected and some who are co-opted. The last elections were held in May 2015.

The population of North Weald Bassett is in excess of 7000 and as such is one of the larger Parish councils within the Epping Forest District.

The Council also operates the North Weald Library on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 9-15am and 1.15pm.

The Council has five main committees, and at various times during each Council year Working Parties and Sub Committees are convened by Councillors to ensure that the necessary work can be undertaken.

- Finance & General Purposes
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Planning
- Parish Hall at Thornwood Common

Full Council Meetings are held Monthly

Planning Meetings are usually held twice a month

Parish Hall at Thornwood Meetings are held Monthly

Environmental Meetings are usually held quarterly

Personnel Meetings are usually held quarterly

Finance & General Purposes Meetings are held twice a year – more often if necessary

An Allotment Meeting is held with all Allotment Holders annually (via the Environmental Meeting)

Additional meetings can be arranged or meetings cancelled if the agenda items are limited. All meetings are held at The Library, High Road, North Weald, unless there is a specific reason to change the location of a meeting, and they are open to the public. At each meeting a period of time is set aside for members of the public to address Council on items on the agenda.

The Parish Council currently holds the Foundation Award after it was re-accredited with Quality Council status in 2012. The Council has also met the eligibility criteria for the use of the Power of General Competence and resolved to use the Power in July 2012.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The administration of the Parish Council is carried out by a fully qualified Clerk who is appointed by the Parish Council. The Clerk is required by law, to carry out all the functions as the Parish Council's proper officer and to issue all statutory notifications. The Clerk is also the designated Responsible Financial Officer. Within the office the Clerk is supported by a Principal Administrative & Financial Officer and Senior Administrative Officer.

All the staff within the office operate the Library Service during the hours of 9.15am to 1.15pm.

The Parish Council also employs a Caretaker at the Parish Hall at Thornwood Common.

The Council currently employs a total of 4 staff, full details of working hours are available from the Parish Office.

OUR VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Parish Council's vision for North Weald Bassett:

A successful, vibrant, attractive Parish, where people want to live, work and visit.

The Parish Council's Mission Statement:

The Parish Council aims to improve the quality of life for the residents of North Weald Bassett by ensuring that North Weald Bassett is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live.

It does this in a number of ways:

- By providing a democratic and representational voice for the community.
- By the provision of [direct] services which are managed to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost.
- Where services are provided by others, the Parish Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively, and in accordance with the wishes of the community.

It works in conjunction with its residents, local authorities and other service providers, businesses and community organisations with the aim of achieving a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable community.

The Parish Council is committed to regularly examining and reviewing its responsibilities and settling a viable development plan for the future. The Council will continue to work towards making significant improvements within the local community, and within the Powers of a Parish Council.

In order to achieve this vision, the Council will:

- Engage in an open dialogue with the residents to understand their needs, and in turn explain how we will address these needs within the resources and powers available to the Parish Council.
- Provide high standard, cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of residents.
- Assist and encourage other bodies to provide such services.
- Promote the best interests of the parish for the betterment of the local community.

The Council's corporate objectives are:

- To enable residents to enjoy high-quality social, recreational and cultural facilities within the parish and to seek the continuing improvement and development of these facilities in accordance with the desires expressed by those residents.
- To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the parish
- To consult with and take due regard of all comments received from other

statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and individuals to ensure improving standards of service that meet with local needs.

- To help create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents (irrespective of their sex, marital status, ethnicity, colour or nationality, ablement/ disablement, age, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliations) and seek to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation
- To safeguard the environment in and around North Weald Bassett from inappropriate development and to maintain it for the future.
- In trying to ensure that it is able to represent and promote these objectives, the Parish Council accepts and acknowledges that it has financial responsibilities.
- In all its deliberations the Council will take into consideration environmental, sustainability and ethical issues.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

General

The Council set a precept of £172,034 for 2015-2016. The precept is the local tax levied by the Parish Council which is collected on our behalf by Epping Forest District Council as the billing authority. The Parish Council's Five Year Business Plan will seek to provide details of its future spending in order that residents can receive an indication of what the precept will be in the future.

Council Tax Band D for 2015-2016 is £1519.50 of which £70.41 is contributed directly to the Parish Council annually.

Income

The Council's income, including rental income, for 2015 -2016 is forecast at £36,000. Additional income is also generated, where appropriate, through a variety of means including the Cemetery, Allotments and Grant Funding.

Reserves

The Council's levels of reserves are reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary, and the Council takes a risk based approach on reserves. The revenue reserves will continue to be assessed at a level based on the recommendation of the Council's Internal Auditor, and in line with any relevant best practice.

Ear Marked Funds will be built up for specific projects identified through consultation with the community, and the budgeting process.

Allowances

Councillors are able to claim an allowance for their duties through a remuneration scheme, however they currently do not do so. There is, however, a separate allowance identified as a Chairman's Allowance so that Chairman's duties may be performed throughout the year. This allowance is used for duties such as Remembrance Day Events.

THE MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Parish Council has responsibility for:

- The running of North Weald Library on Monday Wednesday & Friday mornings
- The management, maintenance and development of The Parish Hall at Thornwood Common
- The upkeep and maintenance of the Playing Field at Thornwood Common
- The Management of five allotment sites
- The management, maintenance and development of Weald Common
- Organising the Annual Remembrance Day Events
- Upkeep and maintenance of various Bus Shelters in the Parish
- Upkeep and maintenance of Various Public Seats
- Upkeep, administration and maintenance of 113 Street Lights
- Upkeep, maintenance and emptying of 12 Dog Bins
- Upkeep and maintenance of 3 Play Areas
- Administration & maintenance Parish Cemetery
- Maintenance and Grasscutting of various Open Spaces, such as Bluemans End, Pike Way
- Christmas Trees in North Weald & Thornwood Common
- Submission of Comments on Planning Applications & Licenses
- Responding to various Consultations
- Liaising with other Local Authorities
- Publicising Matters of Local Interest
- Reporting Highway Matters

THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

Governance Activities:

To achieve our objectives detailed above, the Council will:

- Continue to gauge support from Residents in undertaking a Neighbourhood Area Plan
- Undertake to support flying on North Weald Airfield
- Continue to develop the Council's website providing information about the Council and also providing links to other service providers.
- Update the website with regular news of Council initiatives.

- Continue to provide Press Releases and look to ensure that news of Council activities are distributed effectively.
- Continue to provide an opportunity at each Council meeting for public questions and comments, and to ensure that Residents are aware that this is a 'Platform' for them to come and air their concerns.
- Ensure that the Council Business Plan, including updated versions, are available on the Parish Council website.
- Publish a report covering Parish Council activities during the previous twelve months at the Annual Meeting.
- Review the training needs of both Councillors and staff annually.
- Look to seek accreditation of 'Quality Award Council' Status (or alternative) as recommended by the Local Council's Governing Bodies.
- Continue to investigate the options for cost-effective office facilities for the Parish Council, as the need arises.
- Continue to invite representatives of outside organisations and other authorities to meet with the Council on key matters of interest to residents and Council Members.
- Appoint Members as representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees.
- Staff and Council Members will undertake to attend relevant conferences and meetings.

The Provision of Allotments

- The Parish Council has Five Allotment Sites within the Parish, four of these are on Parish Council owned land, one of these sites is on land which was leased from the District Council (Queens Road Allotment site).
- All the rents generated from the sites goes back into the maintenance of the allotments, and a sum of money is set aside each year for each individual site for the management of the site. However it should be noted that there are costs associated with the staff management time.
- Each site has an Allotment Warden, currently Hastingwood A is warded by a Sub Committee of the Parish Councils Environmental Committee who visit on a Wednesday morning.
- Whilst tenants care for their own plots action is taken by the Council to ensure that plots are made safe if they have not been tenanted for any length of time (under Health and Safety measures).
- A meeting of all Allotment Tenants is held Annually in March

PARISH APPEARANCE, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND SAFETY

- The Parish Council will endeavour to ensure the Parish continues to be an enjoyable, clean and safe environment for residents and people who visit.
- Whilst the Parish Council is not directly responsible for the delivery of such services such as environmental or policing, it does recognise the role it has in

partnership working with the relevant delivery bodies and will continue to work to encourage a high standard of services that meets the needs and expectations of its residents, businesses and visitors to the Parish.

- The Council will continue to work with these bodies and address matters, issues and complaints brought to them by Residents in relation to the Parish's appearance, environment and safety which includes the reporting of items such as litter, fly tipping, dog fouling and anti social behaviour.
- The Parish Council has a Policy for removing graffiti from Parish Council owned property and this will be utilised accordingly.
- The Parish Council is currently investigating a project to place a Public Flower Display close to the Parade of Shops at North Weald which should tidy up the area and also alleviate the parking on the zig zag lines by the crossing thereby improving public safety as well as the environment.

POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

2015 has seen the discontinuation of the Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs) with a new style Community Police Meeting. These have only just started so currently it is unsure as to how successful these are, and these will be monitored.

- New Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are being set up in all areas of the Parish
- To be aware of concerns from local residents especially as the staffing numbers for the Police will be reduced very significantly with three local Police Stations closed, (the Parish Council is currently a front line service as it is based in the Library and will be a 'first point of call' if residents cannot get in touch with the Police)
- To encourage the Police to hold a local Police Surgery in the Library during Parish Council opening times and to Advertise this in a timely manner
- To continue to listen to residents complaints about anti social behaviour and support the Police in addressing those problems.
- To support local residents and the Police by including Police contact information on the Parish Council's website.

HIGHWAYS

- The Parish Council is not responsible for highways within the Parish but it does strive to ensure that the relevant authorities, ie Essex County Council or the Highways Agency or in some cases Epping Forest District Council for unadopted roads and the majority of the parking provision, provide a good quality service for local residents, businesses and those visiting the Parish.
- Road and pavement repairs, traffic flow and winter gritting are the responsibility of Essex County Council.
- The Parish Council strives to ensure that the Parish's roads and pavements are safe.
- The Parish Council receives many complaints on a daily basis, which clearly indicate that local residents have continuing concerns with the local roads and pavements.

As a front line service the Parish Council will continue to report these concerns to Essex County Council

- That local needs and interests are taken into consideration in the planning of any major road repair works.
- The Parish Council will take part in encouraging a Cycling Strategy throughout the Parish

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport is the responsibility of the Essex County Council. Residents have recently contacted the Parish Council to voice their concern that the number of buses are reducing as are the number of destinations that they serve.

The Parish Council will support more effective and affordable public transport services which better meet the needs residents and workers and it will:

- lobby the County Council to improve the quality of services, particularly in terms of costs, destinations served and scheduling.
- Engage with the Heritage Railway.

THE COUNCIL COMMITTEES

As previously stated the full Parish Council meets once a month (except August), and the Council also has five Committees. The responsibilities of those Committees are:

Planning Committee

This Committee is responsible for:

- Planning applications
- Enforcement, appeals and inquiries
- Tree Preservation Orders
- Public Footpaths
- Licensing

Within the period of this plan the Council will:

- Respond to Epping Forest District Council on all planning applications, Licensing applications, Tree Preservation Orders.
- To respond to the Planning Inspector, where necessary and relevant on Planning Appeals.

Finance & General Purposes Committee (FGP)

FGP is responsible for:

- Preparing, control and supervision of the budget

- Setting of the Precept
- Insurance Matters

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Continue to improve the budget setting and monitoring process and to identify efficiencies.
- Review the Council's insurance requirements at least annually
- Continue to review the Council's investments

Parish Hall at Thornwood Common Committee

The Parish Hall at Thornwood Common Committee is responsible for:

- the Management of the Parish Hall
- the Letting & Hiring of the Parish Hall
- the Maintenance of the Parish Hall

Within the period of this plan, the Council will delegate the management committee to:

- continue to review the hiring fees of the hall
- review the income and expenditure of the hall
- oversee the hirings of the hall
- continue to oversee the maintenance of the hall
- the Council will continue to liaise with local residents to ensure that their needs are met when undertaking the management of the hall
- to seek to upgrade the hall, where possible

Personnel Committee

The Personnel committee is responsible for:

- Personnel issues
- Staff Health and Safety
- Employment Policies review
- Training – staff

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- review the management structure and staffing levels to better reflect the changing demands of services and the needs of residents and customers
- Encourage further staff training
- Regularly review all Council policies at least annually

Environmental Committee

This Committee is responsible for:

- Bus Shelters/Street Furniture
- Dog Bins
- Play Areas
- Open Spaces
- Cemetery
- Allotments
- Street Lighting

Within the period of this plan the Council will:

- Maintain the current bus shelters/street furniture
- Consider the provision of bus shelters /street furniture if a need is identified
- Maintain and Consider the provision of the Dog Bins
- Consider the Parish Councils Assets, and review the maintenance of them
- To review the maintenance and health and safety of the Council Play Areas and Open Spaces
- To ensure that the Parish Councils street lighting stock is maintained as per the recommendation of the three / six year maintenance schedule.
- To continue to promote and maintain the cemetery and work to computerise the burial records.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all memorials
- To work with partners and the community to further reduce the amount of litter
- To continue to support Epping Forest District Council's Play in the Park
- To ensure that Health and Safety of Open Spaces, Play Areas, Cemetery and other relevant areas under the auspices of this committee are looked at and adhered to.
- To Commission a tree survey to be carried out every three years for all Council owned and managed land.

All other matters are usually considered by Full Council.

Review Date - May 2021

NWBPC/BP/Jan/2016/sdl