

**NORTH WEALD BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT
2015 - 2016**

Environment

Play Areas - continued to maintain and refurbish the play equipment on three Play Area -, 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.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thornwood Common Field Thornwood Nature Area Mill Street Common -Pike Way Open Space -Bluemans End Recreation Ground -Village Green - High Road -PC Owned Land at Weald Common -North Weald Bassett Parish Cemetery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wheelers Farm Allotments -Queens Road Allotments -Thornwood Allotments -Hastingwood A Allotments -Hastingwood B Allotments |
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Allotments - managed and maintained five allotment sites for use by the public. 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. The costs are still low and the take up of new plots has been quite high this year. We have chickens on one of the sites which has been a huge success. Plot holders meet with Councillors once a year at the Annual Meeting.

Litter-Pick – a small group of Councillors meet up on a monthly basis to arrange litter picks in North Weald Village, close to the Village Hall and Weald Common. They collect at least 4 bags of litter on each occasion.

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 arranged the lighting of a Christmas Tree and a Carol Service at the Parish Hall in Thornwood during the Festive Season.

Bulb Planting – have planted bulbs around the Parish to ensure that all three Villages look lovely and bright during the Spring and Summer.

Liaised with Epping Forest District Council for Bulbs to be planted adjacent to the Talbot Roundabout, after a number of years of negotiations.



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 - remove 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 ten burials and sold two Exclusive Rights of Burial.

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



Marked out - a total of twenty seven new plots

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 approximately 6000 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.

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 general public safety.

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

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

Community Facilities - continued to run the Parish Hall at Thornwood on an efficient and effective basis as a Community Asset for the Parish and 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.

Local Schools - liaised with our local school to seek better representation and establish a good working relationship for the future, and also to give any support that the Parish Council could provide.

Highway Improvements – submit applications for traffic safety/improvement measures via the Local Highways Panel for improvements throughout the Parish.

Essex County Council Minerals & Waste Plan - Strategic Aggregate Recycling Site - identified affected area, adjacent to junction 7 M11 Hastingwood advised local residents, held various meetings, successfully lobbied District and County Councillors regarding the Residents and Parish Councils concerns, with the end result being that the site has now been withdrawn from Essex County Councils Minerals & Waste Plan.

Green Belt Review – held meetings for all residents to attend to explain the District Councils Green Belt Review.

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 a number of ways, including:

- Lobbied Essex Police regarding anti-social behaviour following incidents at Halloween
- Continuing to promote the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes by agreeing to have posters affixed to Parish Council Street Lights advertising the scheme. Members of the Parish Council have also attended a meeting of a New Scheme starting in North Weald. The Parish Council has also regularly posted leaflets on to the Parish Council's notice boards.
- Attended Neighbourhood Action Panel meetings. In addition, Parish Council representatives participated in these meetings, and updated other Council members on a regular basis.

Notice Boards – continued to update the twelve 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. Two new Notice boards have been added, both attached to the new bus stops, one at Pike Way and one at the Talbot.

Newsletters – contributed to the monthly Newsletter - **Village Life** - which includes:

- **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.

Remembrance Sunday - continued to organise the Annual Remembrance Day Service and Wreath Laying at the Debt of Honour at the Norwegian Memorial and also the Remembrance Day Lunch. Also this year the Parish Council organised 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 of progress with the Local Plan, and by communicating with the District Council regarding EFDC'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 are, and what they mean for our community specifically. The Parish Council held a number of events to communicate and advise residents on the Local Plan. The Parish Council made available facilities for a 'Public drop-in session' where individuals could voice their opinions, ask questions, and complete relevant questionnaires, which were then delivered to the relevant authority on the residents behalf.

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 24 meetings to consider planning applications.

Planning Applications - commented on a total of 124 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.

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 at District Council.

Neighbourhood Plan –We have now been given the right to undertake a Neighbourhood plan for North Weald Bassett Parish, albeit omitting part of Hastingwood, despite the Parish Council putting up a legal fight (going almost to a Judicial Review), so that it will be our communities who will decide by a local referendum how the proposals of the future Epping Forest District Council Local Plan will be implemented in our area.



**OUR PLAN
OUR WAY**

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 - updated both Standing Orders & Financial Regulations to reflect 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 was **£172,034** for this financial year. This coming year (2016/2017) it is also set at **£172,034**, this means our spending plans for 2015 – 2016 have been both prudent and financially succinct.

To help you compare our spending, the table below sets out this year’s precept against the previous years.

The Parish Council precept (which is the equivalent of £1.35 per week) amounts to only 4% of your total Council Tax bill. Less than the cost of two large letter first class stamps.

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 2015 -2016

	2014 to 2015 £ thousands	2015 to 2016 £ thousands
Leisure / recreation	18820	31161
Community Services	44317	103576
Administration	102563	101386
Other	6794	6584
Less use of Balances	-21293	-60128
Expenditure Requirement	151201	182579
Less Local Council Tax Support Grant	12464	10545
Precept	138737	172034



**Councillor Cyril Hawkins
Chairman: North Weald Bassett Parish Council - 2015/2016**