

The Annual Parish Assembly of the North Weald Bassett Parish Council, was held on Monday, 4th April 2022, in the Parish Hall, Weald Hall Lane, Thornwood Common at 7.00pm.

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Parish Council Members Present: Councillor Alan Buckley, Chairman
Councillor Anne Grigg, Vice Chairman
Councillors: T Blanks, A Tyler, Mrs S Jackman MBE, G Mulliner,
R Spearman, Ms D Wood, M Stroud

District Councillors Present: C Whitbread**, Miss H Whitbread*, J McIvor*, L Burrows
**Also Essex County Councillors*
*** Also Leader of EFDC*

Essex County Councillor Present: (3) as listed above

Public: Fifty Four
Police: One
Press: One

In Attendance: Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council
Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Public to the Annual Parish Assembly.

1. Introduction of Councillors

The Chairman introduced all Parish, District and County Councillors who were in attendance.

2. To agree the minutes of the Parish Assembly held on Monday, 25th March 2019

The minutes were circulated and all those present **AGREED** that the minutes be approved as a true record.

3. To consider any matters arising from the last meeting

No matters were raised.

4. To receive a report on the Council's activities from:

The Chairman of the Council: Councillor Alan Buckley

The Chairman referred those present to the Annual Report which had been circulated at the meeting. The Chairman highlighted various items contained within the report which the Parish Council had been involved with.

5. To receive a report from District Councillors

Councillor Les Burrows, representing Thornwood Common Ward, reported that following his appointment to the Cabinet, he had been working on Enforcement, Museums and Culture, Highway Rangers and Litter Picking. Cllr Burrows encouraged residents to report issues via the EFDC website.

Councillor Miss Holly Whitbread, representing Thornwood Common Ward, reported on key issues that the District Council were currently dealing with. She said that she had been working closely with Cllr Burrows on the community side, assisting with litter picks. Cllr Miss Whitbread is the Housing Services Portfolio Holder and mentioned Council House Building, £185 million is being allocated for regeneration and repairs over the next 20 years. EFDC are looking to build new council homes for the future. Applicants need to live in the Epping Forest District for 7 years to be able to apply. Cllr Miss Whitbread mentioned Cyril Hawkins

Close in North Weald, which had been opened in 2021. Cllr Miss Whitbread mentioned community safety and said that EFDC have 4 police officers who are employed by them.

Cllr Miss Whitbread referred to her role as an Essex County Councillor, representing Thornwood Common, which she was elected to in May 2021. Cllr Miss Whitbread stated that she has been working on ECC's Library Strategy, which included specialised activity clubs in schools. Cllr Miss Whitbread mentioned the Local Highways Panel, in particular issues in Thornwood which included better signage in Lower Forest Road and looking at the Vision Line in Forest Glade.

Councillor Jaymey Mclvor, representing North Weald (Village) Ward, reported that he had been elected as a District Councillor in 2019. He said that he wanted to thank everyone in North Weald who have been very supportive. Cllr Mclvor said that it had been a very challenging time and said that he had helped as much as he could with individual concerns and said that he welcomed everyone to get in contact with him. Cllr Mclvor mentioned that he had recently been to North Weald Airfield and visited businesses based there.

Cllr Mclvor referred to his role as an Essex County Councillor, representing Ongar and Rural. Cllr Mclvor mentioned his involvement with Ride London and commented that although there would be some impact on the parish, it was important to make the event work for our community. Cllr Mclvor mentioned the support given by the community to the Ukraine and expressed his thanks.

Cllr Mclvor thanked the Parish Council for their support over the past two years. He said that it is a proactive parish council, keeping everyone up to date with what is happening. Cllr Mclvor also mentioned David Jackman of Everything Epping Forest and June Peachey of North Weald Village Life and thanked them both for keeping the community informed.

Councillor Mr Chris Whitbread, representing Thornwood Common as a District Councillor and North Weald as a County Councillor, also Leader of EFDC, reported that there was a lot of work going on at District and said that it was good to see everyone and come out to meet people and get on with the job again. Cllr Whitbread reiterated what Cllr Mclvor had said with regard to challenging times and said that in his role of Essex County Councillor he has responsibility for finance, managing a 1.4 billion revenue budget. Cllr Whitbread mentioned that a lot is being spent on adult social care, children's services and the most vulnerable people in our community. Cllr Whitbread said that ECC would like to spend more on the roads and on Highways, however the money had to be prioritised. Cllr Whitbread said that as District, Parish and County Councillors, they never forget that it is your (residents) money that is being spent.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillors for the grant funding that the Parish Council had received towards projects at the Parish Hall and the Allotments.

6. To receive a report from County Councillors – as above.

6b. Report by Local Police Officer – PC Andy Cook

PC Cook advised that he is the Local Officer for North Weald. He referred to Cllr Miss Whitbread's report and said that there had been quite a lot of work around North Weald: Community Safety Partnership, CCTV and Young Person's Officer Engagement with Youths. PC Cook said that the crime rate is almost zero at the moment and referred to the crime statistics recorded for Thornwood and North Weald. He said that crime is relatively low and commented that it is brought about by good communication.

7. To receive questions from the public concerning matters over which the Parish Council has control or some influence

The Chairman invited members of the public to ask questions and said that if the council is able to answer straight away, it would do, however, if not, names and addresses would be taken and a response would be sent. The Chairman also said that members of the public could put questions in the Question Box, and a

response would be sent. The Chairman reminded those present that they needed to be on the Electoral Roll to ask a question.

Mr Davis, Thornwood Resident, referred to the Ride London Event and asked why the roads are being closed for so long. The Chairman mentioned that there is a public meeting on the 7th April in North Weald (flyers had been distributed at the meeting) and Mr Davis would be welcome to attend and ask questions there. Mr Davis said that he worked on North Weald Airfield and mentioned that a colleague of his was unable to travel to work on the Sunday. Cllr McIvor advised that his colleague would be able to travel to work via an alternative route and confirmed that a map would be available at the public meeting. Mr Davis said that his colleague lived in Chelmsford. The Clerk said that there may be public meetings in Chelmsford as well.

Mr David Lodge said that he had lived in the parish for 40 years and had been a former Chairman of the North Weald Branch of the Royal British Legion, a position that he had held over 20 years. Mr Lodge asked the following questions regarding the Parish War Memorial:

1. Why is the Parish Council not taking responsibility for the Parish War Memorial in the Grounds of the Church?
2. The kerbstones are broken, why have they not been repaired?
3. Will the letters be recoloured?

The Clerk answered his questions in the following order:

1 and 2 The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has always taken responsibility for the Parish War Memorial and it is visited by the Clerk on numerous occasions throughout the year. The Clerk confirmed that she would go and check the kerbstones.

3. The Clerk asked Mr Lodge to note that the Parish War Memorial is being renovated this year for it's Centenary Rededication in June.

Mr Lodge asked why the Parish Council did not undertake a service in the Church on Remembrance Sunday 2021. The Clerk advised Mr Lodge that, as he well knows as a former Chairman of the Royal British Legion, it is the responsibility of the Royal British Legion to undertake the service.

Mr Lodge asked why the Battle of Britain Service had not taken place. The Clerk reminded Mr Lodge that this is a service at the Cross of Sacrifice which is organised by RAFA and she advised him to contact RAFA on this matter.

Mr Jimmy Waters mentioned the state of the pavements throughout Thornwood High Road. Mr Waters mentioned overgrown vegetation and blocked surface water drains. He also mentioned the 60mph speed limit, stating that it urgently needs addressing. Cllr Miss Whitbread advised that the issues had been reported to ECC Highways and she had also spoken to EFDC. Cllr Miss Whitbread said that she is aware of the speed issues and advised that speed surveys had been carried out in the past and that she would keep pushing this. The Clerk confirmed that she would follow Mr Waters questions up with a letter.

Ms Dee Spence advised she had been a resident of Thornwood for 40 years. Ms Spence asked if residents would be provided with a breakdown of the Parish Council's expenditure. The Clerk referred to the breakdown provided in the Annual Report. Ms Spence referred to the expenditure breakdowns provided by Chigwell and Buckhurst Hill Parish Councils and said that they gave full details whereas she felt that the Parish Council had only given 5 lines. Ms Spence said that she would like a breakdown of staff numbers, how many hours worked, etc., so that comparisons could be made.

Ms Spence also referred to Mr Waters question regarding the state of the pavements and said that "we pay our taxes, we can't have a pavement, we can't walk to Epping". The Clerk advised that pavements do not fall under the remit of the Parish Council. Ms Spence asked if the Parish Council had a Highways Committee member who represented transport and said that Buckhurst Hill Parish did. Ms Spence said that Buckhurst Hill have a Transport Environment committee and give details as to how much is spent each year. The Clerk said that the Parish Council did not have specific Transport Committee. The Clerk advised that 2 years ago, Essex County Council offered the Parish Council £4,800 to undertake Highways work. Ms Spence interjected and advised that Buckhurst Hill Parish Council had received £7,000 in 21/22 and £12,000 in 22/23. The Clerk asked Cllr Whitbread to advise as to why North Weald Bassett Parish Council did not accept that money for Highways works.

The Clerk asked Cllr Whitbread if he knew how much money the Parish Council would now receive if they were to undertake Highways work. Cllr Whitbread said that he did not know the exact figure for this year, however the previous figure (of £4,800) was correct. He said that parish councils were quite limited as to the things that they could do. He said that some towns and parishes do maintain a Highways Committee, but those committees cover such things as general street furniture. He said that this parish council covers this under another committee. Cllr Whitbread commented that it is difficult for parishes and towns to undertake work on highways. He referred to the Epping Highways Rangers and mentioned some of the repairs they had undertaken on the High Street in Epping. He said that it had been very difficult to do those as any work needs to be carried out with the permission of Essex Highways. Cllr Whitbread commented that it was not as simple as it all sounds and said that you cannot just have people working on a 60mph road. The Clerk asked Cllr Whitbread if things that the parish council would undertake on its bus shelters and benches, which are covered under its general fund, Buckhurst Hill have put things such as this under a Highways fund. Cllr Whitbread said that he believed this is what you would find. Ms Spence requested a breakdown of the parish council's accounts. The Clerk asked Ms Spence to contact her to arrange to see them and said that she could come into the office any time. Ms Spence said that she would like them via email. The Clerk asked Ms Spence to contact her direct regarding the request.

8. Update from Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Clerk read out the following update:

Local Plan

The Epping Forest District Local Plan has been in progress for over 11 years. The plan sets out the growth of the Epping Forest District in terms of housing and employment up to 2033. Residents should be clear that the Local Plan is created by Epping Forest District Council, and not the Parish Council. For our Parish, there are a number of proposals contained within the Draft Local Plan that will undoubtedly alter the makeup of each of our three villages. These include:

- *1,050 new homes proposed for North Weald Village (broadly between the rear of Queens Road and Vicarage Lane West)*
- *1,050 new homes proposed for Latton Priory (South of Harlow with access of the B1393, forming part of the new Harlow and Gilston Garden Town)*
- *172 homes in Thornwood (either side of the B1393)*
- *A new large Employment Zone on the Eastern side of the airfield*

Many of you will have seen that a number of these proposals have already been consulted upon, and we urge each of you and the whole community, to get involved when these consultations occur. It's your chance to give your opinion on what is being proposed. The Parish Council will do what it can to publicise any such consultations and proposals.

The Current status of the Local Plan is that it has undergone its Examination in Public (in 2019), and that three years on we are still awaiting the Examiners report. Whilst the examiner raised a number of matters she wanted clarification on, or proposed main modifications for, the biggest issue was the potential damage to the Epping Forest that would be caused by the proposed development, and how this could be mitigated. The latest update on the District Councils website is that Examiners report has been delayed, with it previously advised as being expected in Quarter 1 2022 – an update dated 24th March now simply states it will be published in due course.

Neighbourhood Plan

Many of you will recall this Council started the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan some 5 years ago. A Neighbourhood Plan is a statutory planning document that helps shape the future of a particular neighbourhood area – in our case, the whole Parish of North Weald Bassett.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a 'pro-development' document, which must be in general conformity with the development proposals in the Local Plan, which as I previously mentioned includes a lot of development for our Parish. However a Neighbourhood Plan can be so much more. Whilst I would not go so far as to say that either your Parish Council or our residents are 'pro-development', we saw the Neighbourhood Plan as a way to influence the development coming our way so that it integrates well with our villages, and causes as little detrimental impact as possible. In essence, it's about having a seat at the table and ensuring our residents voices must be considered by both Developers and those making the planning decisions – i.e. the District Council. A draft Neighbourhood Plan has now been created, with an emphasis on good design of development that would fit in with our surroundings, however as any such plan must

conform with the local plan The Parish Council has decided to put this on hold until such time as the Local Plan has been agreed and we know the parameters in which we are working. This will save any time and money from being wasted.

Throughout this process, the Neighbourhood Plan has been progressed primarily by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – a group of active local residents (supported by Councillors) who have given up an inordinate amount of their own personal time free of charge to push this project forward, and the Council would like to thank each of you for your hard work and commitment. As part of this process, the Parish Council commissioned two pieces of work:

- *A Heritage and Character Assessment*
- *Design Guidelines*

Both documents lay the foundations of the history and character of our Parish, and should be used by all developers wishing to build in the Parish. They are also a very interesting read, and can be located on the Parish Council's website should any of you wish to have a look. Planning Policy changes so frequently, so at this stage we cannot be sure where the future of our Neighbourhood Plan lies, however we are constantly reviewing this issue, and ensure you that at all times we will act with the best interests of our residents at the forefront of our decisions.

9. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Cllr Ms Wood mentioned plans for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. She said that the Working Group were looking for volunteers to assist with events that are being planned for North Weald, Thornwood and Hastingwood. A flyer had been distributed urging people to get in contact. Cllr Ms Wood said that any help would be very much appreciated.

10. Presentation of Citizen of the Year Awards

The Vice Chairman, Cllr Mrs Grigg, read out the awards for the Allotment Wardens:

The Parish Council showed its appreciation, with a small gift, for all the work that the Allotment Wardens carry out on a voluntary basis:

- Elaine Davis – Allotment Warden for Thornwood
- Paul Dines and Dave Evans – Wardens for Wheelers Farm Gardens and Queens Road Sites in North Weald

The Council also thanked past Wardens, Carmela Coop-Rodia and Brian Palfreman for their work and commitment to both the Wheelers Farm Gardens and Queens Road Allotment Sites. The Council very much appreciated everything that they did.

The Citizen of the Year Award Winners were announced by Councillor Tyler, with the awards handed out by the Chairman:

Runner up in the Group Category – this is awarded to the Wheelers Farm Gardens Community Allotment Group – for their efforts in befriending, learning a new skill and working together. *In July 2021 a Community Allotment Garden in Wheelers Farm Gardens allotment site was unveiled. Volunteers worked together under the guidance of Epping Forest District Council's Community Development Officer. In October 2021, EFDC's Officer left the project and since then the group have continued to work together, becoming part of the community at Wheelers Farm Gardens site.*

Special Award in the Group Category – this is awarded to Ken Knight and North Weald Preservation Society - for all the work they have undertaken in the Parish over the years in continuing making North Weald Bassett a lovely place to live. *This group has been working within the Parish of North Weald Bassett for many years. During the years there have been many well-known residents who have been members and their work has never gone un-noticed. Unfortunately, the Preservation Society sadly closed its doors in 2021 however some of its members continue to carry out works behind the scenes like the upkeep of the garden on the Village Green.*

Winner of the Group Category - this is awarded to the Lazy Salsa Sunday Group - for their continuous fund-raising efforts for good causes. *Over the last five years the Lazy Salsa Sunday Group have organised monthly dances in the North Weald Village Hall. It is run not only for the enjoyment of Salsa Dancing, but to raise money for good causes. So far, their efforts have raised in excess of £15,000.*

Community Champion Award – The Eyes and Ears of North Weald Village – is awarded to Doreen Cleary. *Doreen is always around and always readily available to keep the Clerk updated on any Highways Issues and problems which are happening in North Weald Village. She also does not hesitate in attempting to contact the relevant local authority in the first instance to try to ensure that there is always a swift outcome to any problem that she sees.*

Community Environmental Champion Award – The Eyes and Ears of Thornwood Common – is awarded to Jimmy Waters. *A previous Winner of The Citizen of The Year Award, Jimmy is a keen supporter of everything that goes on within the Village of Thornwood. Jimmy has written and published 2 books about Thornwood, both of which are very informative, delving into the history of the village. The photographs and the information contained in them is a wonderful achievement. Throughout the past two years, Jimmy, ably assisted by Barbara his wife, has continued to regularly undertake litter picks in Upland Road and the surrounding areas. He keeps an eye out for fly-tipping which he reports to the Parish Council on a regular basis. Jimmy also assists Cllr Clegg with the Speed Watch Group.*

Community Environmental Champion Award – for keeping the area free from litter – is awarded to David Tower. *David goes out in all weathers and picks up all the litter around Thornwood. He does this on his own and often in dangerous conditions walking along roads with no footpaths. He is so deserving of this award as he has made such a difference in Thornwood.*

Covid Special Recognition Award – for disseminating information and help within the local community – is awarded to June Peachey. *Jimmy Waters quotes that “June has tirelessly produced issues of North Weald Village Life magazine available free for collection. An informative, easy to read community magazine. She even publishes some of my photos!” However, what we would also like to recognise is that June put together a team of dedicated Volunteers in North Weald to help during the pandemic so we would like to feel that this award also goes some way in recognising the work that North Weald Village Life, together with those Volunteers, undertook during those strange and demanding times”.*

Covid Very Special Community Champion Award – for going above and beyond – is awarded to Dhruve Vasani of North Weald Chemists. *For two years Dhruve has provided the village with much needed medical advice and support. Working long into the evening to ensure our wellbeing. He has offered out of hours services to those who are medically vulnerable, when it was near impossible to get a GP. His whole team have shown care and compassion even when under stress.*

Special Lifetime Award – is awarded to Doris Holden in recognition of her commitment to village organisations and her long association with North Weald. *Doris was 100 years young in April 2020, not an ideal time to celebrate your special birthday. For many years Doris has been an active member of clubs in North Weald, including the Royal British Legion and the monthly Ploughman’s Lunches at the Village Hall. Doris has organised and arranged many group outings and holidays. For many years she arranged the New Year dances. Doris has enjoyed playing bowls, indoors at the Queens Hall, as well as away matches.*

WINNER – CITIZENS OF THE YEAR – is awarded to John and Kathleen Wood, for all their help to the residents in Thornwood, nothing is too much for them. They come along and help at events as well as the allotments and other functions and will always help when anyone needs any assistance. *Kathleen & John Wood belong to two clubs in Thornwood as well as being allotment holders in Thornwood. We cannot think of any couple more deserving than Kathleen and John. They are caring, kind and helpful to a lot of residents in Thornwood. John is always ready to help anyone with fencing, roofing, gardening and any other problem that is “thrown at him”. He never lets anyone down and always ensures that whatever he starts gets finished. Kathleen sews peg bags, lovely shopping bags, knits toys and clothes and makes jams etc., which she sells*

and donates the money to any fund raising and assists a club run in the village. They really are a 'first class couple'.

The Chairman also announced a special mention of the following:

Councillor Andy Tyler, in recognition of the work he undertook during the Pandemic in delivering medications to residents within the Parish. Unfortunately, as he is a councillor, he is unable to be a recipient of the award scheme, but he should receive a special mention during this ceremony for all the work he has undertaken on behalf of the Community.

Councillor Dawn Wood, in recognition of the work undertaken during the Pandemic, who also, unfortunately, is unable to be a recipient of the award scheme but should receive a special mention for all the work she has undertaken. Cllr Wood was successful in applications for Grant Funding to ensure the continued operation of the Queens Hall. Cllr Wood also applied for funding to set up a Food Bank which she continues to run, providing welcome support to members of the local community.

The Parish Council's Press Officer, David Jackman of Everything Epping Forest, who recently received a Highly Commended award from Epping Forest District Council. David was nominated by the Parish Council in recognition of providing a news service to the community.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited all those present to join him to enjoy some refreshments.