

St Stephen Parish Council

Spring Newsletter Issue 24 - 2014



This issue of the Parish Newsletter should reach residents in early March by which time, we hope, high winds and rain will have become a distant memory, and that the parish will be brightened by Spring flowers to cheer us all up. Thinking of blooms in general, it is never too early to think of organising seeds or plants for gardens, hanging baskets and window boxes, in readiness for the Parish in Bloom competition. We were very successful in our first entry in 2013, due to the combined efforts of residents, councillors and our grounds staff; having set the standard last year we look forward to more success this year, with even more gardeners joining up and sharing their ideas with us. If you are keen to take part or can offer practical help with the larger projects, please ring the Parish Office or check our website (details on back page). We would love to hear your ideas.

At this time every year the precept must be set for the following year, and we have deliberated carefully, before deciding not to increase the precept this time. This cannot be the outcome each year, as economic factors nationwide dictate that increases are necessary. We try to be as prudent as possible on behalf of all parishioners, whilst maintaining necessary standards of care of equipment, buildings and services. This has been a very difficult decision and will, of necessity, mean we must look closely at all expenses, including grants, and occasional concessions for some hirers of our facilities. We aim to strike a fair balance for all concerned, and will continue to look after the best interests of this parish. It must be remembered, however, that we as a Parish Council do not receive an official grant (unlike the District Council which does receive it). We have a very tight budget within which to meet all our commitments, and external auditors monitor and guide us on all financial matters.
Cllr Oonah Jones, Chairman

Remembrance Service

This service was, as always, very well attended on Sunday 10th November at the War Memorial in Park Street, with music by Ian la Riviere. Local organisations were well represented with Cadets, Scouts, Guides, Brownies, Rainbows mustering, and schoolchildren came with posies. Parents brought babies in prams, teenagers joined in, and many of our grandparents' generation were there too – joining councillors and staff to pay our respects to those who have died in the honourable service of our country. It is always moving to see the wide age-range of the assembled ranks, and to hear the promise, as always, "We will remember them". Park Street Residents' Association has asked us to take on the organisation of this event in future years, and we are happy to undertake this important duty.

Greenwood Park

Following the confirmation of our second year of qualifying for the Green Flag award at Greenwood Park, the awards body made a 'mystery shopping' visit last Autumn and later informed us: "The Council, staff and the community should feel a real sense of pride and achievement for what is accomplished at this park. It provides real value for money, as a class of local park that isn't overloaded with too many features, but that contributes to the overall parks provision and visitor experience." We are very pleased to receive this confirmation, and we thank all the staff and parishioners who make Greenwood Park such a pleasant place to visit. It is our hope that we may be able to gain Green Flag recognition for Park Street Recreation Ground in the very near future.



The Parish Carol Concert

The Christmas season got off to a fine start with our annual carol concert in the Community Centre, Greenwood Park. Residents filled the hall and, in the presence of our MP Anne Main and St. Albans Mayor Annie Brewster, they enjoyed a splendid evening of traditional carols and lessons supported by local churches and schools. Penny Farmer brought along her donkey as part of the nativity scene at the entrance to the hall. The Concert Choir was as usual in fine voice and this year the atmosphere was enhanced with the addition of a brass band provided by The Watford Band, which gave the evening a real Christmassy feel. Finally, the choir sang 'We Wish You A Merry Christmas', and everyone was invited by the Council to join them for tea and mince pies. Many thanks to the Air Cadets and everyone else who helped to make the evening a great success.

Frogmore footpaths

An application has been made by the Parish Council to have the footpath which runs around the back of the Frogmore lakes, Park Street, made a 'Designated Footpath'. The application supported by, at the last count, 43 statements of evidence from local people using the path over the last 20 years, was sent to the County Council last autumn. A letter from them says that it has been allocated a score of 32, and is first on their list and should be dealt with within the next few months. We thank Jon Breen for his work as the driving force behind the application and the statements of evidence. If successful, we should see an end to the obstructions troubling the users of the path for the past two and a half years.

Wildflower meadow

St Julian's meadow to the north of St Julian's Wood is a site of immense value for flora and fauna and public amenity. It provides a home for many colourful wildflowers, and is a natural home for butterflies, bees and grasshoppers. Small mammals find food and become food for prey species like kestrels, sparrow hawks, owls, kites, foxes and badgers. All will find food in this diverse landscape. In recent years over 95% of wildflower meadows have disappeared; these can never be replaced exactly, but they can be recreated, with long term commitment. We own this site and have managed it with grant aid from Natural England for 20 years. Hay has been cut and carted from site each year, progressively reducing fertility to suit local or indigenous species of plant.



A405 bus shelters - progress at last!

The problems with the bus shelters on either side of the A405 at Bricket Wood have now been discussed on-site with representatives of the Passenger Transport Unit and the Highways Agency. The meeting was held on an extremely wet day which emphasised some of the problems bus users had to endure with a large puddle at the bus stop. We also discussed the general condition of the shelters, the suitability of their location, sight lines for waiting passengers and access footpaths. We felt that the meeting was very positive and we await the ideas of the various agencies to resolve the problems. Hopefully we won't have to wait too long.

News from Brown Owl

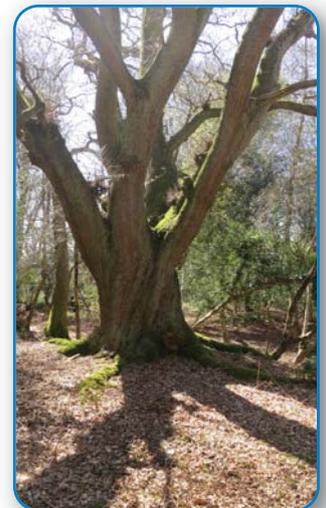
1st Park Street Rainbows and Brownies relocated in September 2013 to the Parish Centre and have been made very welcome. As part of our hiring agreement we have storage facilities at minimal cost, for all our activity and craft equipment which is essential to run our organisation successfully. The premises are clean and bright with adequate parking facilities, for parents to drop off and pick up their children safely. In addition to the Tennyson Hall we have the use of the large field which in good weather we use for nature projects. We hope that this Summer we can again use the field as we will be celebrating 100 years of Brownies.

Planning

Two planning applications have caused concerns in recent times: (1) to build 100 houses on the Building Research Establishment (BRE) grounds, Bricket Wood and (2) to build 14 luxury houses on Green Belt land in Cherry Hill, Chiswell Green. Both were refused by St. Albans District Council (SADC) and both have gone to appeal. The BRE site appeal is to be a public hearing at SADC offices, over 9 days. Interested parties will have an opportunity to speak at the hearing. The date is likely to be in April 2014. The appeal for the Cherry Hill site will have taken place in February. The Parish Council represents your interests at these hearings.

Recently unscrupulous developers in the Parish have cut down mature trees which have had Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) placed upon them. This is being investigated by SADC. TPO's are imposed to preserve trees for all future generations to enjoy. Any attempt to remove them, or carry out work on them, must be with prior written consent of the District Council.

We urge you to report any instances of a tree that may be the subject of a TPO, in danger of being felled or damaged, or where this has already occurred. Instances can be reported directly to Andrew Branch, the Arboriculture Officer at SADC on 01727 819363, or email on treesandwoodlands@stalbans.gov.uk.



Rail Freight Interchange

Since 2005/6, Helioslough has wanted the development; St. Albans District Council, STRIFE, our Parish Council and the residents don't want it. We are told that decision making should be devolved down to local people, and we don't want it. At the County Council meeting on 9 December it was decided that a decision would be made as to whether they sell or lease the land after the 'go ahead' decision has been made. Therefore, we are waiting for the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to make a decision.



Interested in growing your own produce?

The Council has three allotment sites across the parish; one in Park Street Lane, Bricket Wood and two within Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green. Although the site in Bricket Wood is full, there are vacant plots on both sites within Greenwood Park. The annual cost is just £12 for a small plot and £20 for a large plot. If you are a resident of the parish and the thought of growing your own produce appeals to you, then why not try an allotment? Contact Carol Hardy at the Parish Office for more information.



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Grants and financial support

As most people will know, our Parish Council regularly helps to fund local charitable organisations and residents' associations, whenever possible. It is gratifying to hear later how this helps residents. Some recent letters of thanks gave news of, for example, St Luke's Church Lunch Club where lunches are served to elderly, single people on Mondays. Also, our residents' associations are pleased to receive £100 annually for bulbs or wildflower seeds, to plant in the hedgerows, adding colour to the villages. We are pleased to support such activities, and hope to be able to afford this support in future, while still keeping the precept as low as possible.

Rooms for hire

Are you looking for a room to hire in Bricket Wood for meetings or group activities? At the Parish Centre run by St Stephen Parish Council you will find the Tennyson Room, an attractive and spacious room, suitable for children's activities, keep fit, dance and many other uses. We have availability on Mondays from 12:30 until 22:30 and Thursdays all day until 16:30. Upstairs is the comfortable and quiet St Stephen Suite, suitable for all types of meetings and seminars. The price of the Suite includes tea and coffee and it is available most days except for Tuesday evenings and all day Thursdays. Both rooms are available at very reasonable rates and if you are interested in either, please contact Gill Rix on 01727 874867 for more details.

Woodland news

Both Blackgreen Wood and St. Julian's Wood have been given grants towards the ongoing management programme of these Parish Council owned woodlands. These grants will enable us to ensure that the woods continue to be a source of enjoyment for years to come and at the same time provide a sustainable habitat for wildlife. As part of this project we have been ably assisted by two volunteer groups, Friends of Hanstead Wood who extended their field of activity to help clear more of the invasive holly in Blackgreen Wood, and Friends of St. Julian's Wood who planted the 100 trees donated by the Woodland Trust, to help extend the area of St. Julian's Wood. If you would like to know more about either of these groups, contact the Parish Office, or John Bell on 01727 831280.

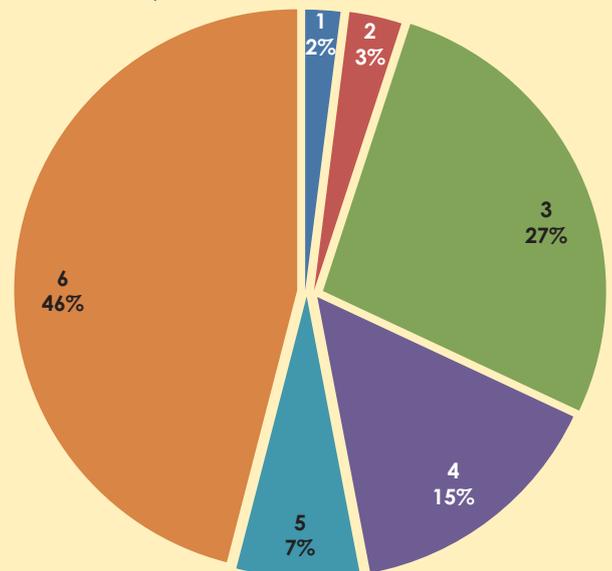


The 2014/2015 parish precept - 0% increase

The precept is the amount of council tax that funds our services in your parish and it is set by Parish Councillors at a public Council meeting. For 2014/15 we have agreed to freeze the precept.

How we plan to use our precept of £382839 in 2014/15

- 1 Community Centres 2%**
Greenwood Park Community Centre, Parish Centre.
- 2 Allotments 3%**
Tippendell Lane, Watford Road, Park Street Lane.
- 3 Democratic Representation 27%**
Communications, committee and member support, elections, monitoring planning applications, local representation.
- 4 Community Services 15%**
Community Awards, Books for Schools awards, Christmas Carol Concert, 2014 Parish Festival, Parish in Bloom, Annual Parish meeting, Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Service, bus shelters, litter and dog bins, notice boards, street furniture, community grants, public toilets, gardens, woodlands.
- 5 Corporate Management 7%**
Administrative and statutory responsibilities.
- 6 Recreational facilities 46%**
Sports facilities, pavilions, parks, play areas.



Community Events Diary

13 Mar: Bricket Wood Residents' Association AGM

St Luke's Church 8pm 01923 673598

24 Mar: Film of Hansteads & AGM

Bricket Wood Society, Bricket Wood URC 7.30pm £1
01923 279870

29 Mar: Fund-raising

Scout Hut, Watford Road from 10am 50p 07775 544344

7 Apr: Bricket Wood Neighbourhood Watch AGM

8pm St Stephen Parish Centre 01923 671869

12 Apr: Friends of Hanstead Wood at Blackgreen Wood

Entrance opposite Woodbury Field 10am

18 Apr: Open Air Good Friday Service

10.30am How Wood Shops

22 Apr: Distraction Burglaries, Rogue Traders and Pickpockets

Park Street Neighbourhood Watch, Park Street Baptist Church
8pm 01727 874293

24 Apr: Restoring Hertfordshire's Rivers

Ver Valley Society, St Stephen Parish Centre 7.30pm

3 May: Charity Jumble Sale

St Bart's Church Hall 10am 50p 01727 873672

8 May: Annual Parish Meeting

Greenwood Park Community Centre, Chiswell Green 7pm

15 May: Annual Main Council Meeting

St Stephen Parish Centre, Bricket Wood 7.30pm

16-18 May: 2014 Festival

Greenwood Park

17 May: Greenwood Park Tennis Club Open Day

1.30-3.30pm

Police Surgeries: 01707 806213

24 Mar: St Stephen Parish Centre 1-2pm

16 Apr: Park St Police Office, PS Recreation Ground 5-6pm

24 May: St Stephen Parish Centre 1-2pm

25 Jun: Park St Police Office, PS Recreation Ground 6-7pm

For a full list of local activities please see our website.

A new Cafe in Bricket Wood

It is always good to hear of a new venture in the parish, and we welcome the opening of a cafe in Oakwood Road called 'T in the Woods'. It is run by a local family, and we wish the cafe success.

Annual Parish Meeting

You are invited to attend the Annual Parish meeting on Thursday 8 May at Greenwood Park Community Centre. Please join us for light refreshments at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. This is your opportunity to meet your Parish Councillors and hear about your Council's achievements during the past year, and its aims for the future. In addition to a brief presentation by the Council, there will be presentations of the Community Awards, and books to our local primary schools, as well as a guest speaker talking about a local topic of interest. Our notice boards and website will carry more information closer to the time. We look forward to seeing you there.

2014 Festival

Friday 16 to Sunday 18 May 2014
Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green
Book the dates in your diary now
(see posters for times).

A weekend of fun, enjoyment,
excitement and culture.

A Festival of the Arts and the
Parish Fete (was the Park Street fete)

Paintings, sculpture, ceramics, dance,
musicians and singers, arts and crafts.

Fete stalls, children's entertainment, dog show, falconry,
penalty shoot-out and more.

Sunday morning service by the churches of the Parish.

Armed Forces Day

In the last week of June, at the Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, Armed Forces Day will be a celebration of the work of the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, and the sacrifices that they make. Come and join us for the flag raising ceremony, followed by Brass Band and light refreshments. Precise dates and times will be advertised on our notice boards. All are welcome.

Keetch Hospice charity shop

This charity shop in How Wood has in its first year been very successful. Every penny is used wisely to provide play therapists, or for 24-hour care as an in-patient, and for community visits for children. The Hospice Lottery has also raised £2,776 this year. We congratulate Lisa Adams and her team of dedicated volunteers, and commend the generosity of residents in aid of such a worthy cause.



St Stephen Parish Councillors

Bricket Wood

Cllr Jay Baillie 01923 404770 • Cllr Wendy Berriman 01923 673355
Cllr David Brannen 01923 662423 • Cllr Dorothy Kerry 01923 663352

Chiswell Green

Cllr John Bell 01727 831280 • Cllr Karen Hurford 07710 860337 • Cllr Oonah Jones 01727 865333

Park Street

Cllr Michael Freeman 01727 873543 • Cllr Ian Getley 01727 872507
Cllr Bill Pryce 01727 873181 • Cllr Nicholas Tyndale 01727 872647 • Cllr Eileen Whittaker 01727 873710

Parish Council Meetings

Main Council and Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber at the St Stephen Parish Centre in Station Road, Bricket Wood. Times and dates are displayed on the parish noticeboards. Residents are welcome to attend the meetings.



The Parish Office

First floor, The St Stephen Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, St Albans, AL2 3PJ.

Tel: 01923 681443 Fax: 01923 681338

Email: clerk@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Open Daily from 9.00am to 5.00pm or by prior appointment.

Contact either: Juliet Pienaar, Clerk or Carol Hardy, Assistant Clerk.

