

St Stephen Parish Council

Summer Newsletter Issue 25 - 2014



Parish Bluebell Walk

Annual Report - Chairman Cllr Oonah Jones

It has been a pleasure to serve as Chairman of the Parish Council this year, and as Vice Chairman for the previous two years. We are fortunate to live in this parish with its three villages, ancient woodlands, wildflowers including bluebells in the meadows, well-maintained playing fields, and with good bus and train services available for commuters.

Other councillors will elaborate on the facilities we have available for hire, and on work to be done in the woodlands, as well as Planning matters which are ongoing – especially with the need to preserve Green Belt land wherever possible, and of course leisure amenities. Necessary organisational work is undertaken by parish councillors, with the guidance of the Parish Clerk and the strong backing of her administration and maintenance staff as well as the grounds team led by Head Groundsman Gary Field – who this year celebrates 34 years' service with us.

At the time of writing we are about to enjoy a 3-day Festival in mid-May at Greenwood Park, covering drama, dance, art, sculpture plus fun and games for the youngsters, with a dance as well as a Fair. This year we have had a renewal of the Green Flag award at Greenwood Park, and we hope to gain the same award for Park Street Recreation Ground. We did well in the Parish in Bloom competition in 2013 and hope to repeat that success.

Every November we are heartened by the increasing numbers who attend the Remembrance Service at the Parish War Memorial in Park Street, and in early December the Carol Concert is a great start to the Christmas celebrations. On Saturday 28 June at the Parish Centre from

4-6 pm we will be raising the Armed Forces Day flag, and invite you to join us for a cup of tea after the flag raising.

Bus shelters figure prominently in our concerns, and our grounds staff keep up with minor repairs, but we must obey safety constraints laid down by Highways officers. If a shelter becomes unsuitable through age, it is very expensive to replace. The shelter near the former Red Cow pub has been replaced, using a grant from HCC. On Watford Road, Chiswell Green two shelters have been replaced recently. We are fortunate to have had help from a local company, Lafarge Tarmac who funded the installation of the new footpath at Blackgreen Wood leading to Park Street Lane. The Forestry Commission has funded the new bridge linking the path to the road. Our grounds team made the bridge using timber from our woodlands. Lafarge also donated some huge boulders to enhance the entrance to Greenwood Park, as well as resolving the footpath problem at the Frogmore Lakes, and we thank them.

Financial aid has also come from the Forestry Commission for our woodlands and from Natural England to maintain the wildflower meadow in Greenwood Park. We hope to keep up this standard of care in the woods and parks, along with grants to help elderly residents having a Christmas dinner, spring bulb and wildflower seed supplies to Residents' Associations, reductions in room hire charges for charities, etc. We decided not to impose any increase on the precept for the current year. This is good news for parishioners, but it does mean there will be less money to cover all the normal expenses every parish must face.

Parish Bluebell walk

Despite a poor earlier weather forecast, the day turned out better than expected and about 50 residents with their families turned up to join the walk. The bluebells this year excelled themselves in both Jack Williams Wood and on Bricket Wood Common. The walk itself was kept at a leisurely pace so there was plenty of time for everyone to take in the spectacular performance laid on by the bluebells, and to take lots of photographs. Everyone enjoyed the walk and commented later how lucky we are in having these delightful woodlands on our doorstep.

We are indebted to Cllr. John Bell who has been organizing the annual bluebell walks for many years now, and who has produced the maps of three circular walks in the parish. Free copies of these are available from a number of local shops.





Trees & Woodlands Committee - Cllr John Bell **Blackgreen Wood - Park Street access**

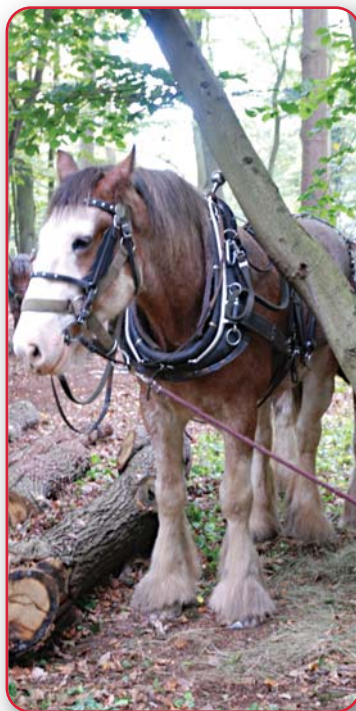
Good news for Park Street residents! Blackgreen Wood which we own has a new entrance from Park Street Lane. The original access had to be closed for road safety reasons, so the wood was only accessible from the Bricket Wood direction. Now, thanks to a generous grant from Lafarge Tarmac, a new path has been installed to provide access from the lane.

Park Street residents will find the new entrance on the south side of the M25 bridge, just before the two cottages. At the entrance you will find a small bridge which has been constructed by our Grounds Team using timber sourced from Blackgreen Wood. From there you will be able to explore the wood either by walking through to Lye Lane in Bricket Wood, or by taking a circular route back to Park Street Lane. With the completion of the new entrance this local woodland will now be accessible for all residents to enjoy, and to assist this we hope to install woodland signposts at strategic points within the wood, to help those not so familiar with the area.

Woodland Craft Day

The Forestry Commission has confirmed that we will receive a grant towards the management of both St Julian's Wood and Blackgreen Wood, and this will allow our staff and volunteers to continue rejuvenating both woodlands. Areas where some trees and holly have already been removed on the first phase are clearly showing signs of improvement now that a lot more light is reaching into the woodland.

To help residents understand the role of woodland management, the Parish Council has arranged a special Woodlands Craft Day in Blackgreen Wood on Saturday 13 September, where traditional woodland crafts will be demonstrated. We will also have the heavy horse team in action, pulling some of the felled oak to the mobile sawmill, where it will be cut into suitable sizes for use in the parish. This will be an interesting day, so do look out for the advertisements and bring all the family!



Planning Committee - Cllr Michael Freeman

Recently there appears to be an increase in applications for a Certificate of Lawfulness, as opposed to a full planning application. These are mainly for extensions to properties where the applicant or the builder feels that a full planning application is not necessary. Decisions on both types of application rest with the District Council.

There still exists the threat to the Green Belt with an application to build houses at the rear of Hawfield Gardens, land to the west of the A5183 opposite Mount Drive. Residents have set up a petition opposing this development and we fully agree that it would be an inappropriate development. We can expect more such planning applications to encroach into the Green Belt.

The planning application by Barrett Homes to build on the Green Belt in Cherry Hill, Chiswell Green, went to appeal, and at that hearing both District and Parish Councillors spoke against it. The planning inspector refused the appeal, primarily on the grounds that it was an inappropriate development within the Green Belt. We hope future appeals have the same result. No decision has yet been made by District Council on the redevelopment of the former HSBC site. The application was for outline planning permission for a large quantity of homes to be built.

No decision has been made on the proposed Rail Freight Terminal in Park Street. This went before the HCC where it was resolved that no action would be taken until such time as Eric Pickles made a decision, and irrespective of what that decision was, there was no reason for HCC to sell the land to Helioslough. They may decide to sell the land to another party for another purpose.

Legal proceedings are being considered by the District Council in respect of unauthorised felling of trees in Bricket Wood which had Tree Preservation Orders on them. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

A decision is awaited on the appeal re proposed housing on the BRE site in Bricket Wood.

Frogmore Lakes

For many, a quiet stroll along the footpath around the back of the Frogmore Lakes was an ideal way to spend an hour or two away from the pressures of everyday life. For others it was an exciting way to spend time watching the wildlife on the lakes and in wooded areas. However, for the last two years this pleasure has been curtailed when the footpath was blocked off with fencing and padlocked gates erected by the angling club. Much work went on to persuade the owners, Lafarge, to have the gates removed, or at least unlocked during daylight hours. It reached a stage where the Parish Council submitted an application to HCC for the footpath to be made a definitive Path – aided by some sterling work by a local resident, Jon Breen. This application was being processed when Lafarge themselves stated their intention to have the Footpath defined, and to protect the fishing rights and preserve the wildlife a low fence would be erected between the footpath and the lakes. Therefore the arrangement by Lafarge should satisfy the desires of all concerned. We would like to thank Lafarge, who already contribute much to the local community, for their consideration and timely intervention.

Bus Shelters

The bus shelters petition for upgrading and improving the two shelters either side of the A405 has gained over 150 signatures, and is due at the time of writing, to be presented to the Highways Panel of the HCC on 13 May. Mr John Coller of Bricket Wood Residents' Association will present the petition, supported by the Parish Council, at that meeting. Hopefully the petition, together with the officers' report will convince the Panel that these bus shelters are in desperate need of upgrading, and give their approval for the project.



Leisure Committee - Cllr Bill Pryce Activity Leaflet

We have produced a leaflet detailing the activities that go on in Parish premises, to show where and when you can be involved. Telephone numbers of contacts for clubs and associations are included, together with numbers for Parish contacts and the Centres Manager, Gill Rix. Greenwood Park Community Centre and the Parish Centre have rooms for hire for

meetings, training, parties, weddings etc.

Sports facilities can be hired for football, cricket and many other sports. Children's play areas are second to none. Pick up a leaflet and see just what is available to you.

Defibrillator

With the wide variety of activities that take place at Greenwood Park and the age variation of participants, we have decided to purchase a defibrillator. This is a device that is used when a person is in cardiac arrest – a heart attack – and it can be used (without training) to revive that person. As you will know, when such an attack occurs every second counts, and this device may well be the life saver. Of course, we all hope that it will never be required, but as a safety measure it is a first-line piece of equipment. The purchase of the defibrillator has been possible through the very generous sponsorship of a number of clubs and organisations that use Greenwood Park, and we thank them for that – full list of sponsors to be published later. The equipment will be stored in an alarmed cabinet for safety and security reasons.



Armed Forces Day

We will be raising the Armed Forces Day Flag at a ceremony at the Parish Centre, Bricket Wood on Saturday 28 June from 4-6pm. The event will comprise serving members of the Armed Forces, with ex-service personnel, and the Watford Brass Band. Light refreshments will be served. We look forward to meeting you, so please come and support our country's Armed Forces and their families.

Rail Freight Interchange

We are waiting for Eric Pickles to make a decision, after which Herts County Council will consider the sale of the land to Helioslough. There is talk about the use of Section 106 money (which the developer pays to enhance/improve the infrastructure should the monstrosity go ahead). So, the message is still "Watch this space". As Mr Pickles has said, "Green belt is sacrosanct and should be preserved at all costs". We agree.

Phone scams

If a caller claims to be either a bank worker or a Police Officer, remember that NO Police Officer and NO Bank Worker would EVER ask for our bank account details by telephone. If you are in ANY doubt – use a different telephone to ring the Police on 101 for advice. (This is because the caller may wait on your line, without hanging up.) Visit your bank in person to discuss your concerns.



Your Community Centre

Are you aware that in Greenwood Park we have a Community Centre run by St Stephen Parish Council? Maybe you are, but did you realise the wide variety of facilities available? We have a large sports hall, which is suitable for most indoor sports such as badminton, basketball, bowls, karate, ju-jitsu and football (with soft balls), and also fitness classes such as Pilates, and for many other uses. It is useful for children's parties where a large space is needed, and for football or go-kart parties. Dances, weddings and large gatherings can be held here, and we have had events such as dog shows, craft fairs and exhibitions held in the sports hall. If you are looking for a large venue for any of the above please contact the Centres Manager, Gill Rix, on 01727-874867 or by e-mail to bookings@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk for availability and price. We would be happy to arrange a tour of the Centre before making a booking.

Buildings Committee - Cllr David Brannen

As every prudent householder or business owner knows, buildings must be insured and kept in good repair year by year, otherwise the expense of repairs can become unmanageable if left undone. We work hard to maintain all our buildings (offices, work rooms, halls and function rooms, toilets etc) in good, serviceable working order, keeping costs as low as possible within our annual budget allocation. In the current year despite further constraints on our resources, due to our decision to freeze the precept, we have refurbished the Parish Centre toilets and re-configured the offices. The guttering and fascias have been replaced on Greenwood Park Pavilion and the windows replaced in the Community Centre. Where possible improvements have been carried out in-house to keep costs down. We shall do our utmost to tackle necessary work wisely, and in a timely fashion, but it must be remembered that with resources limited as they are, some preferred works may have to be deferred until next year.



Health Walks

Do you like walking in the countryside in good company? If so, we are happy to pass on some interesting news from HCC. Their Countryside Management Service (CMS) is offering a free training day to new volunteers who would like to lead Health Walks in their local area. The contact details are:

- 1) Visit www.hertfordshirehealthwalks.org
- 2) Health Walks Project Officer Sian Price on 01992 556033
- 3) Email: healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Anyone for Tennis?

Greenwood Park Tennis Club are extending their programme of sessions to target non-members, and thus give those who perhaps thought that tennis was beyond them, or that they were not fit enough to play, a chance to become involved. There is no experience requirement. In fact if you have never held a tennis racket before it might be an advantage, as you will not have picked up any bad habits. Examples of the sessions are: Drop in Sessions- held on the public court where you can take a fitness and coaching class at times accessible to you, aimed at 25 – 50 year olds; Cardio Tennis - a fun and challenging 1 hour session aimed at fitness using tennis drills set to music – that sounds fun! These will be held on Mondays: 7-8pm, Thursdays 9.30-10.30am, Saturday 9-10am (ideal for young parents as there is also children's coaching taking place at the same time). Go along, have some fun, get fit and learn to handle the racket. Bookings for the public court can be made at Mr. Patel's shop (Ramish's/Day 1 Convenience Store) on Watford Road.



Community Events Diary

- 14 June: Friends of Hanstead Wood Volunteer Day,**
meet at car park entrance, 10am
- 24 June: Open Meeting 'St Albans East End',**
Bricket Wood Society, BW URC 7.30pm £1, 01923 279870
- 8 July: Site Inspection of Bricket Wood Common,**
meet at the Parish Centre 6.30pm
- 17 July: Rise, Fall & Rebirth of London's Docklands,**
CG Townswomen's Guild, CG URC 7.15pm, 01727 850373
- 20 July: Organised Litter Pick, PS Neighbourhood Watch,**
Park Street Recreation Ground 10am, 01727 873181
- 25 Aug: Community BBQ,**
Park Street Baptist Church, 12-4pm free, 01727 370882
- 6 Sept: St Stephen Gardening Club Annual Show,**
How Wood School, 2.30 - 4.30pm free, 01727 872718
- 11 Sept: Parish Gardening Awards Evening,**
Greenwood Park Community Centre, 7pm
- 16 Sept: Countryside Management & the Brown Trout,**
Park St & Frogmore Soc. PS Village Hall, 8.15pm £1
01727 873612
- 20 Sept: Charity Jumble Sale,**
St Bart's Church Hall, 10-11am, 50p, 01727 873672
- Main Council Meetings:**
19 June, 17 July, 18 September
- Police Surgery, Park Street Police Office:**
25 June, 6-7pm, 15 July 5-6pm

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

BW Bricket Wood CG Chiswell Green PS Park Street
URC United Reform Church

St Stephen Parish Councillors



Cllr John Bell
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 831280



Cllr Jay Baillie
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 404770



Cllr David Brannen
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 662423



Cllr Wendy Berriman
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 673355



Cllr Ian Getley
Park Street Councillor
01727 872507



Cllr Michael Freeman
Park Street Councillor
01727 873543



Cllr Oonah Jones
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 865333



Cllr Karen Hurford
Chiswell Green Councillor
07710 860337



Cllr Bill Pryce
Park Street Councillor
01727 873181



Cllr Dorothy Kerry
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 663352



Cllr Eileen Whittaker
Park Street Councillor
01727 873710



Cllr Nicholas Tyndale
Park Street Councillor
01727 872647

A summary of the 2013/14 accounts can be found on our website:

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

A hard copy is available from the Parish Council Office.

St Stephen Parish Council

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.

