



ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

Summer Newsletter Issue 29 - 2015

Annual Report by Council Chairman

It has been my privilege to have been Chairman for the past 12 months. The past year has been, as usual, extremely busy and your Council has continued to host events such as the Carol Concert, Remembrance Day Service, Parish in Bloom and Armed Forces Day. All of these events continued to attract ever more numbers than before and your Council intends to continue to host them. (Armed Forces Day will be held at the Parish Centre on Sunday 27 June 2015, with the Watford Brass band playing again.) Those of you who attended the Remembrance Day Service I hope will have noticed that the Parish War Memorial has been cleaned. The Councillors engaged in Parish in Bloom are already hard at work with the planting of the various flowerbeds. It is anticipated that the St Stephen Festival will again be held in May 2016.

Currently your Council is seeking funding to improve the playground facilities at Greenwood Park to enable a greater number of children to use the equipment, which I can assure you will be something to behold.

It is sad that the Post Office in How Wood closed in early April. This is a great loss to the residents of Park Street, with two other Post Offices that served the area having already been closed. Great efforts have been made by Parish Councillors to identify suitable premises within How Wood that would be prepared to accommodate a Post Office, but to date this has been unsuccessful. However, other avenues are being explored as to where Post Office services could be located and as soon as there are any developments your Council will keep you informed.

Cllr Michael Freeman

Two honoured with Community Awards

Your Parish Council Community Awards are presented annually to persons who have made a significant contribution to the community. Candidates must be nominated with supporting evidence as well as live or work within the Parish. This year the Adult award was presented to Niki Dunn (*left*) for her relentless service over the years to the Scouts and the Scouting movement. People like Niki enable youth movements to continue. The Youth award was presented to Cameron O'Connor (*right*), a young lad who is still at school, for his voluntary work with Keech Hospice charity shop in How Wood. Volunteers like Cameron enable charities to survive.



Helping our community

Your Council supports local organisations by way of grants, discounted use of facilities and by charity collections at Council events. Some of the organisations that have benefitted from this are: STRiFE (Stop the Rail Freight Exchange), St Luke's Lunch Club, Herts Air Ambulance, Combat Stress, Dementia UK, Park Street Neighbourhood Watch, St Stephen's Gardening Club, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Macmillan Cancer Support, Watford Peace Hospice, Community Rail Partnership, 1st Park Street Rainbows & Brownies and Waverley Driving for Disabled Association. We also make an annual donation of books to our local school libraries (*above*).

St Stephen – A Quality Parish Council

Quality Parish status awarded in 2009 established that your Council met independently assessed benchmark standards of an active, professional and competent body representative of the community, delivering efficient services to local residents. The Local Council Award Scheme has recently replaced this accreditation and we are pleased to have received the Foundation Award.



Your brand new parish website

For information on the latest Parish news, events, services, projects and opportunities, please see your brand new Parish website. It has been entirely redesigned in order to make it more useful and accessible to you. More improvements are to come, so your feedback on the new site would be most welcome.

See: www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Trees & Woodlands Committee report

We continue to manage and care for the two woodlands owned by your Council. Many of you attended the Open Day in Blackgreen Wood, where woodland management and crafts were demonstrated, and enjoyed watching the horse teams at work (*below*) and trying the traditional skills used by woodsmen of the past. Volunteers, supported by the Friends of Hanstead Wood, have improved access by clearing holly and brambles and installing two benches for quiet contemplation. There is a new entrance to Blackgreen Wood from Park Street Lane via a small bridge just south of where the lane goes over the M25. Volunteers have also been busy in St Julian's Wood, carrying out a number of tasks including placing brash (cut branches) along the edges of the woodland paths to help protect the bluebells. We have had mixed results with some tree saplings that were planted last year – however we shall keep an eye on the survivors. Your Council Grounds Team, who handle the heavier tasks in the wood, have been thinning and coppicing some of the trees in selected areas to increase the light falling on the woodland floor. This will help the dormant seedbanks in the soil to germinate and in the long term regenerate the wood. Volunteers have also enjoyed carrying out some hedge-laying along the cycle path in the park. In the near future look out for the new information boards at both woodlands.

Cllr John Bell, Chairman



Leisure Committee report

This committee looks after all six parks and open spaces, the children's play areas and the adult exercise equipment at Park Street Recreation Ground, together with some of the activities in the Parish premises.

The safety of the equipment within the children's play areas is checked once a week by our Grounds Team and annually by an independent company. At the last check all the equipment received the lowest risk rating that can be achieved. However, we have had to remove various pieces which were potentially dangerous. We have plans to put new equipment in Greenwood Park, Park Street Recreation Ground and some of the other areas, money permitting.

Greenwood Park in particular has a special attraction as it offers a wide range of activities, outdoors, football, cricket, tennis, indoors basketball, bowls, badminton, martial arts, dance and exercise. It also has ample parking space. We would like more people to use the parks and open spaces as it provides exercise and fresh air to parents and children alike, and to encourage that we are again taking part in the National 'Love Parks' week in July (see back page).

Don't forget that once a year we have an open forum where you can meet the Councillors and Staff to talk about your needs, wants and desires, comments and criticisms as far as the use of the Council's premises and leisure in the Parish is concerned.

Cllr Bill Pryce, Chairman



Buildings Committee report

It's been another busy year, as we continually strive to maintain and improve our facilities with what seems like an ever-decreasing budget. This year in the Greenwood Park Sports Hall we have replaced the lighting with a low-energy phased system, the floor has been sanded, relined and resealed, and the walls painted. It looks fabulous and comments from the users have been very positive, with one saying how much nicer it is than Westminster Lodge.

Have you noticed the new UPVC cladding on Greenwood Park Community Centre? This replaced the rotting wooden cladding, is maintenance free and will last for many years. There are also plans afoot to extend and improve the tennis and cricket club facilities at Greenwood Park Pavilion. The plans and grant funding necessary to carry forward this project are being driven by Greenwood Park Tennis Club, with enthusiastic support from your Council. If the District Council approve the scheme and grant funding is obtained, then this work will come at no cost to your Council.

The Parish Centre's 18th-century barn (*above*) has been returned to its original black colour, which will also preserve the oak cladding. We continue to investigate how best to provide a fully accessible public access point at the Parish Centre.

Cllr David Brannen, Chairman

Planning Committee report

As planning applications continue to arrive it is evident that our Parish is a desirable place to live.

Major applications include the proposed building of a Sainsbury's convenience store adjacent to the Three Hammers PH in Chiswell Green. A great deal of opposition came from local residents to this application and the District Council, on principle, refused the application. However, as the application was not determined within the time limit the applicant has gone to appeal.

The application to redevelop the former HSBC site in Bricket Wood was refused by the District Council's Planning Referrals Committee, but the applicant has submitted an appeal.

It was disappointing news that the latest attempt to halt the development of the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange in Park Street was dismissed by the High Court. However, the District Council has decided to challenge that decision.

A planning application has been submitted to redevelop the former Harperbury Hospital site in Harper Lane for housing. This is a brown-field site which has stood derelict for a number of years. One of the proposals is to install traffic lights to govern the flow of traffic using the narrow bridge at the junction of the A5183 and Harper Lane.

Cllr Michael Freeman, Chairman

Gimme shelters

Your Council's programme of maintaining our rural-style bus shelters around the three villages includes regular checks and repairs carried out by our Staff, to keep residents safe and dry while waiting for the bus. The older shelters are steadily being replaced through our rolling replacement plan or through external grants. However, because of highway restrictions on our staff working on the A405, we have negotiated with County Council to replace the two shelters near the Blackboy Pub and upgrade the lay-bys, by November.

Retaining postal services

In January the Co-op gave notice of its decision to close its Post Office counter in How Wood in April. Given the time required to identify and appoint a new provider, your Council wrote to the Co-op to ask if it would consider delaying the decision until a new location could be identified; this was unsuccessful. We have been working with the Post Office to establish if one of the other retailers in How Wood would consider operating a Post Office service, but as this has not proved possible, we are now investigating the provision of an outreach service.

New Bricket Wood Village Sign

The new Village Sign, funded by the Bricket Wood Residents' Association and your Council, is complete after nearly two years' effort. Possible designs were displayed at meetings to ensure as many residents as possible had the chance to have their say. Thanks to Laurie Hart and Gordon Wroe for working to make this happen and to Ringway, which significantly subsidised the costs of installation.



The clock says Tick Tock and it's time to say hello

I have been running Tick Tock music classes in the Tennyson Hall at St Stephen Parish Centre every Monday in term time for four years. We are still going strong entertaining local children and the children from Tots Nursery. We are even offering summer classes, open to all, on 20 and 27 July at 9.30am. We describe ourselves as musical theatre for the under-5s, putting on different themed classes each week to keep both parent and baby's minds active. The children are encouraged to join in singing, dancing and character recognition. Along with rhythmic talking to help develop speech and understand rhythm, we have lots of brightly coloured costumes, props and puppets to keep them all entertained. If you would like more information about our classes please visit our website (www.ticktockmusic.co.uk) or email (abiticktock@yahoo.co.uk) or call me (07933 153054). We hope to see you soon.

Abi, Tick Tock Music

Could your group make use of the Parish facilities?

See 'Venue Hire': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk



Neighbourhood Plan – Have your say

This is probably the most exciting and wide-ranging community project that your Council has undertaken. A successful Neighbourhood Plan must involve the whole community, and requires commitment and enthusiasm from volunteers taking part. More than 60 people took part in the inaugural meeting in March. Our consultant gave an overview of Neighbourhood Planning, and then took comments and questions. Those present were asked what they want for their Parish, and those interested in participating put their names down for one of the five specific areas of interest; the responses are now being analysed. At the time of writing, three further introductory meetings were scheduled. In April the District Council Cabinet decided that the Parish boundary was the appropriate boundary for the Plan.

See 'Council Projects': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk



New picnic seating for Woodbury Field

A new picnic bench has been installed in Woodbury Field, in a co-operative venture between Bricket Wood Residents' Association (which sponsored the bench) and your Council (whose Grounds Team constructed and installed it). The bench is made from oak extracted from nearby Blackgreen Wood as part of your Council's Ten-Year Management Plan. Standing (l-r): Matt Huddleston, Groundsman, and Gary Field, Head Groundsman, St Stephen Parish Council; seated (l-r): Gordon Wroe, Treasurer, Anne Morton, Chairman, and Mike Carter, Bricket Wood Residents' Association.

Access to libraries

Your Council responded to the consultation document 'Inspired Libraries' and made a case for the retention of mobile libraries, as they provide a vital link for those who are unable to get to a main library. The consultation determined that the mobile library service, as such, was not an option but County Council is considering two other options: the home library service (delivery of the books you have chosen) or the provision of transport to a main library.

Thanks to the previous newsletter editor

Production of this newsletter requires hard work by various Councillors and Council staff. Our thanks for the fantastic efforts of Oonah Jones who, until she retired from the Council, worked with the Council Clerk to collate and edit the newsletter. This role has now been taken over by Cllr Nicholas Tyndale, who holds the Parish Communications Portfolio and we wish him every success.

Armed Forces Day: Saturday 27 June

Please join the parade which will leave Hunters Ride/Black Boy Wood shops at 3.30pm or come straight to the Parish Centre, where around 4pm we will raise the flag in honour of our forces past and present. There will be a brass band, with WWI and WW2 memorabilia on display. Free light refreshments available.



Crafts in Greenwood Park

27-29 July 2015, 11am - 12.30pm
Free children's arts and crafts activities as part of Love Parks Week. Activities include: painting, colouring, beads, clay modelling and more. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Donations will be accepted in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity.



Dates for your diary

19 June: Parish in Bloom, closing date for garden entries

20 June: Abbey Line Trail Walk, 2¾ miles Park Street to Bricket Wood, 10.15am - 12.30pm, www.hertsdirect.org/walksandmore

12 July: Guided Butterfly Walk, Herts & Middx Butterfly Conservation, on Bricket Wood Common, 10am - 12.30pm, meet St Stephen Parish Centre car park, free, 07768 154324

15 July: Parish in Bloom, closing date for children's competitions

18 July: Abbey Line Trail Walk, 2¾ miles Garston to Watford Junction, 10.15am - 12.30pm, 01992 588433

8 Aug: Blackgreen Wood Volunteer day, meet at the kissing-gate opposite Woodbury Field, 10am

31 Aug: Community BBQ, Park Street Baptist Church, 12noon - 4pm, free, 01727 370882

6 Sept: Strawberry Tea & Doggy Fun Day, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Greenwood Park, 2 - 5 pm

Play in the Parks for 3 - 12 year olds:

27 Jul, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Aug, Woodbury Field, AL2 3QQ,

24, 31 Jul, 7, 14, 21, 28 Aug, Greenwood Park, AL2 3HW, 9.15am - 11.15am, 01727 819531, Alex.Varran@1life.co.uk

Main Parish Council Meetings:

18 June, 16 July, St Stephen Parish Centre, 7.30pm

2015 Parish Council events

27 Jun: Armed Forces Day, St Stephen Parish Centre

27-29 Jul: Crafts in Greenwood Park

7-9 Aug: Funfair, Greenwood Park

10 Sep: Parish in Bloom Awards Evening, Greenwood Park

8 Nov: Remembrance Service, Park Street War Memorial

6 Dec: Annual Carol Concert, Greenwood Park

For more local activities please see our website:

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

St Stephen Parish Councillors



Cllr John Bell
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 831280

Cllr Wendy Berryman

Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 673355



Cllr David Brannen
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 662423

Cllr Michael Freeman

Park Street Councillor
01727 873543



Cllr Ian Getley
Park Street Councillor
01727 872507

Cllr Karen Hurford

Chiswell Green Councillor
07710 860337



Cllr Martin Doyle
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 859676

Cllr Dorothy Kerry

Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 663352



Cllr Bill Pryce
Park Street Councillor
01727 873181

Cllr Nicholas Tyndale

Park Street Councillor
01727 872647



Cllr Eileen Whittaker
Park Street Councillor
01727 873710

Vacancy

A summary of the 2014/15 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, St Stephen Parish Centre,
Station Road, Bricket Wood,
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Open Daily from 9.00am to 5.00pm or by prior appointment. Contact either:
Juliet Pienaar, Clerk, or Carol Hardy, Assistant Clerk

