

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020/21

The purpose of this report is to give a summary of what the Parish Council has been doing during the last year and to comment on the major issues that we are facing as a parish. There is more information available on our community website at [www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk](http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk) and our Neighbourhood Plan website at [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

During the year, the Parish Council has held six Parish Council meetings and an Annual Parish meeting. Individual Parish Councillors took the following responsibilities.

Mark Orson – Chairman - EHC Gilston Steering Group representative, Neighbourhood Plan Group representative

Janine Bryant – Vice Chair - Neighbourhood Plan Group representative and Village Hall Management Committee representative

Teresa Baxter

Lucille Beazley

Linda Harvey

Jim Jones - Parish Paths

Rob Wightwick - Highways

Christine Law – Parish Clerk

I would like to thank Teresa Baxter who stood down as parish councillor in February this year, we wish her well for the future.

East Herts Council Electoral Services has agreed that we can co-opt a resident for the vacant Parish Council seat for Eastwick and if you are interested in finding out about the role, please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk for an informal discussion.

## **COVID-19 – Parish Council Meetings**

The Parish Council will continue certainly for our May meeting to meet online using Zoom video and audio to support our meeting sessions. We will publish a link for meetings so that residents are able to join us to ask questions at the public participation section and observe our business meeting.

## **COVID-19 - Support for the vulnerable in our community**

The parish council has endorsed and is actively supporting the Sawbridgeworth & District Churches Action Group initiative to bring residents help and support in whatever form that may take during this COVID 19 Pandemic.

There is one 0800 number for residents to call if help is needed, responses are fully safeguarded, and delivery volunteers all hold a valid DBS check. For help with:

- Prescription collection
- Shopping
- Prayer
- Anything else

**Call: 0800 689 1724**

## **COVID-19 – after lockdown**

Hopefully, we will continue to make progress in line with the Government's step-by-step roadmap plan to ease restrictions in England. This means that if everything continues to go well all restrictions will be lifted from 21 June. In anticipation of achieving this major milestone the parish council is making plans for a post Covid celebration event on 1 August that will be held outdoors at Eastwick. More information to follow as plans develop and if you have any ideas or can offer support, please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk.

## District Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

The District Plan that shapes the future of East Herts to 2033 see [www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan) was adopted in September 2018. The District Plan Policy GA1 for the Gilston Area allows removal of a large section of Metropolitan Green Belt, the building of approximately 3,000 dwellings and associated infrastructure during the plan period to 2033 with the potential for a further 7,000 dwellings to follow.

The Parish Council has focused our engagement with East Herts Council (EHC) and Places for People (PFP), the primary landowner, on District Plan matters through the Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group (HEGNP) chaired by Anthony Bickmore. Anthony makes an annual report to the Parish Council that will be published in the Parish Magazine, the community website [www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk](http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk) and the HEGNP website [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

For the latest information and reference documents please see the HEGNP website at [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk). This includes all HEGNP group meeting minutes, Gilston Area workshops meeting minutes, Gilston Steering Group meeting minutes and representations to EHC on District Plan Consultations.

After much consultation with residents, developers, other stakeholders and experts, the HEGNP has drafted a comprehensive Neighbourhood Plan. The plan underwent and passed independent examination by Christopher Lockhart-Mummery QC between October 2020 and February 2021.

It was accepted by East Herts Council soon after and will go to a public vote on Thursday, May 27, 2021.

You can download and read the Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan in full and consult the full evidence base at [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

The HEGNP has also been active organising presentations for residents on a number of planning applications and consultations and making formal responses on behalf of residents that have been endorsed by the Parish Council as sponsor and can be seen at [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk):

- **The Outline Application – Villages 1-6 (3/19/1045/OUT)** - This application from Places for People seeks to secure the basic agreements for 6 out of the 7 villages planned to be built North of the Stort Valley and the A414 Gilston and comprises up to 8,500 residential homes and facilities.

The HEGNPG has expressed its overall objection to the outline planning application for the 6 new villages. It later maintained its objection to the revised application.

- **Listed Building Works – 3/19/1049/LBC** - This application from Places for People seeks listed building works to Fiddlers Brook Bridge as part of the broader transport planning applications.

The HEGNPG has expressed its overall objection to both the applications for the Eastern Crossings of the Stort Valley as currently submitted. It later maintained its objection to the revised application.

- **The Outline Application – Village 7 (3/19/2124/OUT)** - This application from City & Provincial Properties seeks to secure the basic agreements for Village 7, to be built on land off Church Lane and the A414 in Hunsdon and Eastwick, Hertfordshire and comprises up to 1,500 residential homes and facilities.

The HEGNPG has expressed its overall objection to this outline planning application for Village 7. It later maintained its objection to the revised application.

- **The Eastern Crossing (3/19/1051/FUL)** - The application from Places for People seeks to reroute the A414 from Harlow right through the middle of Pye Corner and Terlings Park into Harlow with a new bridge over the River Stort. It makes Pye Corner a cul-de-sac.

The HEGNPG has expressed its overall objection to both detailed applications for the Eastern Crossings of the Stort Valley as currently submitted. It later maintained its objection to the revised application.

- **Central Stort Crossing (3/19/1046/FUL)** - The application from Places for People aims to widen the existing access and road/rail bridge into Harlow from the Eastwick roundabout and proposes a high-level bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.

The HEGNPG has expressed its overall objection to both detailed applications for the Central Crossing of Stort Valley as currently submitted. It later maintained its objection to the revised application.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anthony and the HEGNP team for their hard work and diligence. They are all unpaid and contribute massive amounts of time.

### **Litter Picks and Fly Tipping**

Litter picks - East Herts Council provide periodic litter picks but despite persistent follow up they are never made as frequently as needed and they do not pick all the areas that need to be cleared. The parish council is now organising litter picking sessions on the last Saturday of every month between 9 -11 am manned by resident volunteers. The first of these took place on 24 April, volunteers were issued with gloves, picker, bags, and hi-vis vests. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk.

Thanks to all those who volunteered – it makes a big difference.

Fly Tipping - as a rural area we have many unmonitored and relatively secluded spaces in the parish that provide opportunities for fly tipping to take place.

It is particularly important for the East Herts Council Enforcement and Inspection Team to be informed before rubbish is cleared so that investigation can be made to identify any possible clues as to the source of the rubbish that has been tipped.

Full guidance on what to do / how to report fly tipping is published in the Parish Magazine and the community website [www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk](http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk).

### **Defibrillator**

A second defibrillator has been installed within our parishes, the first one is located at the Village Hall and the second at The Lion Pub Eastwick, located in the pub courtyard, with the kind permission of McMullen Breweries. This second defibrillator, cabinet and installation were paid for from our New Homes Bonus.

Years ago, only medics could use a defibrillator in a cardiac arrest emergency, now anyone can use this lifesaving equipment. Administering CPR and the defibrillator is the most powerful combination in saving life and the earlier it is applied the better the chance is of a person surviving cardiac arrest - for every minute that passes without defibrillation the chances of survival diminish by 10%.

We continue exploring possibilities for installation of additional defibrillators at other locations within our parishes, for example within Terlings Park.

### **Planning**

We have had a number of planning applications to comment on during the year and most have been reasonably straightforward and non-contentious changes to existing properties. The major planning issues affecting our area are addressed by our Neighbourhood Plan, please see the HEGNP website [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk) and Anthony Bickmore's chairman's report for a full update on the status and issues.

We have been in regular contact with Planning Enforcement who deal with planning infringements and take enforcement action where necessary. We will provide updates as matters progress via the parish magazine and community website.

### **Highways**

We continue to work closely with Highways to ensure that Highway's maintenance activities are carried out effectively and meet our local needs. As with all local services Highways work is governed by budget and availability of resources and getting work carried out in a timely manner can sometimes be a frustrating struggle. However, we have an agreed schedule of outstanding work and take every opportunity to push for priority treatment.

During the last year we have pushed for clearance of footpaths and timely repair of potholes.

### **Parish Paths**

The parish footpath network is a real asset, and I would encourage anyone who hasn't walked them to try and find the time as it will give you another perspective on our local area. Copies of the parish paths brochure/map are available from St Mary's Church porch or Christine Law; our Parish Clerk. You will also find several display maps of the footpath network located around the parishes including both the Eastwick and Gilston War Memorial sites.

If you are aware of any parts of our footpath network that need maintenance including overgrown vegetation or fallen trees, please inform Christine Law our parish clerk and we will follow up with HCC Countryside & Rights of Way.

### **Parish Precept**

You will have recently received the booklet from East Herts Council outlining your Council Tax payments for 2021/22. Part of the Council Tax is made up of the Parish Precept which is set by the Parish Council to cover small running costs and a number of initiatives we undertake. The amount attaching to your Council Tax for the parish is a function of what we spend and the number of properties and their valuation bands in the area.

We have maintained our parish precept at the same level as for 2019/20. If you have views on how we should spend our money and if we should spend more or less, then let one of the Parish Councillors know or attend a Parish Council meeting. We are always keen to hear views and enjoy the interaction with members of the public at the meetings – all are welcome.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, we have again made good progress and are fortunate to have a dedicated and hardworking team of Councillors. They devote a lot of their time for the benefit of the community which is unpaid, and they claim no expenses. Thanks also to Christine Law, our Parish Clerk.

Mark Orson