

EASTWICK AND GILSTON PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

ARE HELD ON THE SECOND (2ND) MONDAY IN JANUARY, MARCH, MAY, JULY, SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER OF EACH YEAR.

MARCH'S MEETING IS THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
(THIS IS A MEETING OF THE ELECTORATE AND NOT A PARISH COUNCIL MEETING).

FOLLOWED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

MAY'S MEETING IS THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
FOLLOWED BY THE NORMAL BUSINESS MEETING.

ALL MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE MOST WELCOME TO JOIN US AT THESE MEETINGS.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BUSINESS MEETING WE HAVE A 10-15 MINUTE SLOT WHERE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ADDRESS THE PARISH COUNCIL ON COUNCIL MATTERS.

AFTER THIS, THE PUBLIC ARE ASKED TO PLEASE BE SILENT SO THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL CAN HOLD THEIR MEETING.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE ALLOWED TO BE PRESENT DURING OUR MEETINGS BUT ARE NOT ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE.

VENUE:

THE VILLAGE HALL, PYE CORNER, GILSTON.
MEETINGS START AT 8.00PM UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED IN THE PARISH MAGAZINE OR ON THE NOTICE BOARDS OR WEB SITE.

In the year of Local Government Elections, the Annual Meeting of the Council will be held between the fourth and fourteenth day after the election (inclusive).

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting of the Electorate and is not a meeting of the Council. The Annual Parish Meeting is held between 1 March and 1 June (both inclusive).

EASTWICK AND GILSTON PARISH COUNCILLORS 2016/17



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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT:

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PARISH WEB SITE: www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016/17

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, our Neighbourhood Plan website at www.hegnp.org.uk and the STOP Harlow North website and Facebook pages at www.stopharlownorth.com and www.facebook.com/#!/pages/STOP-Harlow-North-Campaign/151589618240500.

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 - Parish Paths and Planning Matters
Spike Hughes – Vice Chairman - STOP Harlow North representative
Tim Geddes – Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group representative
Amanda Olsen - Village Hall Management Committee liaison
Lucille Beazley- Highways Matters
Christine Law – Parish Clerk

There is still one vacancy for Parish Councillor and we are short of representation for Terlings Park and also Eastwick. If you are interested in the role of parish councillor and would like more information please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk, on 411646 or email christine.law2@btinternet.com.

Neighbourhood Plan and District Plan

I gave an interim update on Neighbourhood and District planning matters in March that was published in the Parish Magazine and our website www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk. For the latest information and reference documents please see the Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan (HEGNP) website at www.hegnp.org.uk. This includes all HEGNP steering group and Gilston Area workshops meeting minutes, the pre-submission draft East Herts District Plan [now submitted] for the Villages and The Gilston Area and the HEGNP response to the 2016 public consultation on the Pre-submission District Plan. The HEGNP website also provides answers to the questions:

- What is Neighbourhood Planning?
- Why are the two Parish Councils working together?
- When is the HEGNP going to be produced?
- How does this affect me as a resident, business or landowner?
- Where will the HEGNP apply?
- Who is developing the HEGNP?

If you do not have access to the internet and / or have any questions on Neighbourhood and District planning matters or are motivated to become involved please let me or Christine Law our Parish Clerk know.

To give some context there are two related processes taking place:

- District Plan
- Neighbourhood Plan

The District Plan is the planning document that will shape the future of East Herts to 2033 see www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan and our Neighbourhood Plan must fit with the approved District Plan

Our Neighbourhood Plan project has been largely undermined by the sudden decision of East Herts Council in late 2016 to include the Gilston Area [previously known as “Harlow North”] as a preferred site for major housing development in its latest draft of the District Plan.

As background, in late 2015 the District Plan was at the stage of the Preferred Options draft. This identified The Gilston Area as one of three Broad Locations for Development but recognised that insufficient work has

been undertaken to determine whether an allocation should be made, and acknowledged the need for a further Development Plan Document to address the ability to provide all necessary infrastructure in parallel with new housing, and of the implications of the current Green Belt designation which would preclude any development.

However in the Pre-submission draft of the District Plan which was tabled for public consultation closing in December 2016 prior to its intended submission for Independent Examination, the Gilston Area had been positively advanced and the need for the associated Development Plan Document dismissed. At the same time as this major change in policy was being effected, East Herts Council, in association with Harlow Council and surrounding authorities sought to take advantage of a government 'Garden Towns and Villages Initiative' to secure additional funding for related studies. To this end it proposed the 'Harlow and Gilston Garden Town' concept and the application was successful in being awarded a grant of over £0.5M from central government.

The two Parish Councils strongly object to this change in policy and are most concerned both at the absence of commitment to provide all necessary infrastructure to support this scale of development and at the total absence of meaningful public consultation on the proposals. However on the basis that 'a bad Neighbourhood Plan is probably worse than no Neighbourhood Plan' the team is working with the East Herts Council and other stakeholders to mitigate the impact of the decision and still produce a valuable and effective document.

Overall, the Parish Council continues to strongly oppose building up to 10,000 homes in the Gilston area and is an active founder member of the STOP Harlow North campaign group that is formed by mandated representatives of the Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston, High Wych and Widford Parish Councils and the Town of Sawbridgeworth. Please see the STOP Harlow North website at www.stopharlownorth.com and Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/#!/pages/STOP-Harlow-North-Campaign/151589618240500 for full information on our campaign.

By taking a constructive approach to development of our Neighbourhood Plan coupled with active support of the STOP Harlow North campaign the Parish Council will endeavour to achieve the best outcome and representation for residents.

Terlings Park

Welcome to our many new residents in Terlings Park. We are told that the final units will be fully occupied by the summer which will have doubled the size of our community.

Once the remaining residential construction is completed around June time works will commence to lay the final surfacing to the estate roads and footpaths as well as any outstanding work to the areas of open space

Unfortunately works to the footpath link to Burnt Mill Lane were significantly delayed however works to the boardwalk are now scheduled to commence in April which enable completion. This will allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross Terlings Park and avoid using the C161 from Terlings Park entrance to the Dusty Miller and the hill section of Burnt Mill Lane from the Dusty Miller down to The Stort. The pathway will be partially lit and should be a safer and more pleasant route than we currently have available.

Finally, the developer will hand ownership to the new management company later in the year when the development is complete. My understanding is that they will call an EGM to nominate a board of directors from the development which will include representation from the Parish Council.

We will keep residents informed of progress through the Parish Magazine and our website www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk.

Website

The website has been up and running since 2012 and with the arrival of Terlings Park residents it is time to review our website content and use of website facilities to make sure that we are making best use. For example, in addition to providing static information and photographs we can also include Discussion Forums, Blogs, Community Pages and Consultations. If you have any views or suggestions for how the website could be used and/or types of information that should be published to support our community, please let us know.

This is a community website and we are also looking for local groups who would like to use the facilities to support their activities. No costs or charges will apply for use of the site.

For more information and to discuss your ideas please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk, on 411646 or email christine.law2@btinternet.com.

Village Signs

The parish council is planning to install village signs for both Eastwick and Gilston. Exact locations are still to be determined and we have taken advice from Highways and Planning as to the processes and approvals that will be required. The signs will be made of forged metal on a wooden post similar to the sign for Sawbridgeworth close to the entrance to Bell Street.

As you will have seen in the parish magazine and website, we have asked for suggestions for design of the signs and are now at the stage of discussing artwork production with the supplier in preparation for final review and consultation with residents.

New Homes Bonus

I want to make residents aware that the parish is in the process of receiving what amount to windfall payments from the New Homes Bonus scheme. The New Homes Bonus is a Government scheme which is aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permissions for the building of new homes in return for additional revenue. Under the scheme, the Government matches the Council Tax raised on each new home built for a period of 6 years. The parish council receives a proportion of this funding [which amounts to around £50,000 over the period] and East Herts Council advises that this can be spent at our discretion.

We are starting to gather ideas and suggestions for how this money might be spent for the benefit of the community and will provide more information via the parish magazine and website but if you have any immediate ideas and suggestions please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk, on 411646 or email christine.law2@btinternet.com.

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 and the STOP Harlow North campaign.

Highways

We continue to work closely with Highways to ensure that Highways 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 in particular pushed for litter picking to be carried out and timely repair of potholes.

Parish Paths

The parish footpath network is a real asset and I would again encourage anyone who hasn't walked them to try and find the time as it will give you another perspective on our local area. Our footpaths are well maintained and we have continued to keep them so during the last year with grants and practical help from the Rights of Way department and Countryside Management Service.

Copies of the parish paths brochure/map are available from Christine Law, our Parish Clerk. You will also find a number of display maps of the footpath network located around the parishes including both the Eastwick and Gilston War Memorial sites.

Parish Precept

You will have recently received the booklet from East Herts Council outlining your rates for 2017/2018. Part of the rates 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 rates for the parish is a function of what we spend and the number of properties and their valuation bands in the area.

This year we deliberately maintained our precept at the same level for the ninth year running.

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 to Bob Brunton and Roger Beeching who are our District and County Councillors respectively they give valued support to the Parish Council. Roger will not be standing in the May elections and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his help and advice over the years and to wish him a very happy retirement. Thanks also to Christine Law, our Parish Clerk.

Mark Orson

EASTWICK AND GILSTON PARISH COUNCIL30
SUMMARY OF RECEIPT AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR
THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2017

	RECEIPTS			PAYMENTS	
2015/2016		2016/2017	2015/2016		2016/2017
£4900.00	Precept	£4900.00	£4,471.67	General Administration	£11,598.81
£6.62	Interest of Investments	£4.39			
£1071.00	New Homes Bonus	£13,278.00		RUNNING COSTS:	
£740.00	Advertising – Parish Magazine	£500.00	£253.00	War Memorials	£150.00
			£800.00	Churchyards	£400.00
£333.32	Other income	£,385.37	£902.50	Parish Magazine	£1,571.33
£826.22	Transparency Code Grant	£325.04	£2,115.20	Maintenance village planters	£669.49
£345.32	VAT Refund	£551.41	£728.98	Computer	£0
£8,222.39	TOTAL RECEIPTS	£21,944.21	£9,271.35	TOTAL PAYMENTS	£14,389.63

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY

Balance brought forward £10,751.82
ADD Total Receipts £21,944.21
LESS Total Payments £14,389.63
Balance carried forward £18,306.40

These cumulative funds are represented by:

Bank Current Account Balance £2,457.60
Uncashed Cheques £ 610.00
Bank Reserve Account Balance £16,458.80
Cash at bank £18,306.40

SIGNED

CHAIRMAN – Mark Orson
DATED – 8.5.2017

CLERK/RESPONSIBLE OFFICER – Christine Law