

Little Bardfield Parish Council - 2017/2018 Report

Current Parish Council Membership (PC)

Cllr William Gardiner (Chairman), LB
Cllr Terry Cutmore (Vice Chairman), HG
Cllr Clare Beeston, HG
Cllr Andrew Davies, LB
Cllr Colin Simpson, OE

Supported by:

Parish Clerk:
Mrs Chelsea Feltham-Williams, January-December 2017.
Miss Delia Scott, January 2018 - ongoing
Uttlesford District Council, (UDC) Cllr Simon Howell
Essex County Council, (ECC) Cllr Simon Walsh
Essex Association of Local Councils: www.ealc.gov.uk

Parish Council Meetings

Council Meetings are held four times per year. The Annual General Meeting is held in May. Additional meetings are held as required to review Planning Applications. Minutes are published on the Notice boards and can also be viewed on the website. <http://www.essexinfo.net/littlebardfieldpc/>

PC Meetings were held:

2017: January 4, February 6, May 8, August 30, September 11, November 13, December 11.

2018: February 12.

Scheduled 2018 dates: AGM May 14, September 10 and November 12, all in St Katherines Church.

Meetings were also held with UDC in Saffron Walden on March 15 and May 10, 2017.

Email correspondence between Parish, District and County Councillors is very frequent.

Hawkspur Green residents can join their information sharing group by contacting

tcutmore@btinternet.com.

Items addressed during this period:

Finance (PC)

1. Having suffered significant and continued incompetence by Santander, we moved our bank account to Lloyds Bank in January 2017. To date, it has operated satisfactorily.
2. Our finances currently operate in three separate accounts.
 - a General Account for day-to-day operations,
 - a small Reserve Account to meet the charge by UDC for any required election.
 - a Community Benefit Account which can only be used for designated community projects. A new bank account is in the process of being established to ensure that these funds are clearly separate from the main Parish Council accounts.
3. Precept: This term describes the amount of money the Parish Council needs to carry out its business. There are 101 properties in the Parish with varying levels of occupation and varying levels of taxation. The precept is included in the Annual Council Tax Bill that we all pay to UDC and is remitted to the PC in two instalments to our General Account.
The 2017/18 Parish Council annual precept increased by less than the price of one cup of coffee. There was no further increase for 2018/19.
4. During our representations with the project management for the Solar Farm in Hawkspur Green we secured an undertaking for an annual "Community Benefit" compensatory

payment, related to the actual power generated, for 20 years. This money cannot be used for the Parish Council's general operations or to offset resident's local taxes.

Regrettably, a similar arrangement was not secured with the earlier Solar Farm within the Parish situated south of the Bardfield Road, between Little Bardfield and Oxen End.

To date, the Community Benefit has been used to replace three notice boards and to donate towards the St Katherines Church roof repairs.

Planning Applications 2017/18 UDC (all areas)

Uttlesford District Council are obliged to invite comments from the Parish Council on all Planning Applications submitted regarding any property within the Parish. However, the Parish Council believe UDC Planning Department take little, if any, notice of their input when the final decisions on Planning Applications are made tending towards this being a futile exercise for the PC.

Planning Applications reviewed during this period:

16/0860 The Lodge LB - Basement and extension

17/1174 Rose Cottage LB - extension (withdrawn)

17/2036 Rose Cottage LB - extension

17/2144 Glebe Barn OE - additional windows

17/2382 Ruspers St Katherines Green LB - extension

17/2220 Land north west of Rosedale HG - two new properties.

The PC were in favour of this development for this infill vacant site. Regrettably, the Planning Application was full of inaccuracies, irrelevancies, omissions and untruths. UDC refused permission as being "unsustainable" but an appeal is anticipated.

17/2468 Yew Tree Cottage LB - retrospective conversion of a barn to residential.

17/2638 Chequers LB - conversion of outbuilding to residential.

17/3037 Solar Farm HG - battery storage.

17/3748 Coft Hall OE – extension

18/0648 Hillside Cottage HG – garden room

18/0665 Fanns Bungalow OE – change of occupancy restriction

UDC Environmental Health requested Brook House HG to reposition security lighting to stop it dazzling drivers on the lane and its impact on nearby properties.

Essex County Council (ECC)

We are strongly supported by ECC Cllr Simon Wash

1. Potholes and road defects: We were fortunate to have all our roads and lanes resurfaced. Several potholes have developed since the snow and have been reported to ECC for repair.
2. Traffic Diversions HG: There has been considerable representation with Essex County Council Highways over the signing of the single-track lane between Little Bardfield and Little Sampford to take diverted two-way traffic from the Bardfield Road and the lane between Thaxted and Little Sampford. For some unknown reason the lane is designated by ECC as a Priority 2 Route and occasionally is included in the salt gritting program for such a route. Having been assured by ECC that this diversion designation for a single-track lane was an error and that their office records had been corrected, it has at least twice again been published by ECC in the local newspapers and signed as a diversionary route. The resulting two-way traffic has caused considerable damage to the grass verges.
Another diversion recurrence has re-opened this dialogue between the PC and ECC Highways.
3. Culvert Jetting HG: ECC Contractors jetted/cleared several under-road culverts in Hawkspur Green.
4. Field drainage onto the lane near to Small Farm, HG: There is an ongoing problem with surface water draining from a ditch onto the lane causing a large puddle opposite the entrance to

- Small Farm. Apart from the traffic hazard and mud, the road surface is also deteriorating. The PC are in discussion with ECC Highways to persuade the land owner to take remedial action.
5. Bridge repairs LB: Just south of Moor Hall a small stream flows under the road. The roadway forming a bridge over the stream had strengthening work carried out.
 6. Cook's Lane HG: Roadworks have been carried out on this lane.

For Essex Highways Information contact: www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/interactive-maps-and-live-travel-information/highways-information-map.aspx

Uttlesford District Council (UDC)

We are strongly supported by UDC Cllr Simon Howell

Hawkspur Green Lane - Little Sampford Road

The unsigned lane running from Little Bardfield north through Hawkspur Green to Little Sampford, as far as most of us knew, did not have a name. However, confusingly different public authorities, such as ECC, UDC and Affinity Water, each referred to it differently and not always consistently within that authority. Being single track, technically, it is of insufficient width to be classified as a "road".

The Parish boundaries change at Gambers Hall Farm from Little Bardfield to Little Sampford.

The PC decided to address this confusion by pursuing with UDC the official naming of the lane between Little Bardfield and the Parish Boundary at Gambers Hall Farm as Hawkspur Green Lane.

We established that the unsigned part of the lane from Gambers Hall Farm to Little Sampford had an entry in the National Street Gazetteer as Hawkspur Green Road, despite it being too narrow to be classified as a "road". Prolonged discussions and meetings took place with UDC staff. They advised that as the Little Bardfield - Hawkspur Green part of the lane apparently did not have any entry in the National Street Gazetteer then it was permissible, according to the UDC Street Naming Policy and Guidelines, for the PC to assign the name Hawkspur Green Lane. However, it became apparent that the UDC policy documents were inconsistent and flawed. Additionally, the UDC staff were at variance with each other's opinions. Having arrived at the point where the PC were so frustrated by UDC's continued indecision, we gave notice of citing UDC for "abuse of process" to higher authority. Within 48 hours UDC discovered documentation that established the lane from Little Bardfield to Gambers Hall Farm had been named Little Sampford Road in June 1997. The lane from Gambers to Little Sampford had been named Hawkspur Green Road in August 1999. Both naming's without reference to either Parish Council. Upon examination, both names are illogical and inaccurate. Such was the embarrassment experienced within UDC that the Assistant Director refused to permit our PC to progress its request to have our part of the lane re-named Hawkspur Green Lane or to avoid confusion, the whole of the lane given the same name. To spend funds challenging this vindictive decision would be irresponsible. We have advised UDC that we would prefer the lane to remain unsigned. The close examination by our PC of UDC's street naming policy documents revealed so much confusion and errors including legal inaccuracies, that UDC have re-written both policy documents! One may draw one's own conclusions as to how competent this authority will be in implementing the Uttlesford District Local Plan.

Bridleway (HG)

There has been no further adverse activity at this location. ECC have responsibility for the surface being classified as a public bridleway. An application by the Parish Council to the Land Registry for title of the land over which the bridleway passes was unsuccessful.

As was predicted in the response to the Planning Application for the Solar Farm, now that field is no longer being cultivated, excessive rainfall instead of largely soaking into the ground as before now runs down the side of the bridleway and overwhelms the culvert under the road posing a flood risk to nearby properties. The ditches have been cleared by members of the Parish Council and residents. ECC also provided a culvert jetting service. Despite these actions the melting snow just before New

Year again overwhelmed the Hawkspur Green culvert flooding the roadway and threatening nearby properties. ECC have again cleared obstructions in the under-road culvert.

Broadband (all areas)

Discussions have taken place with various private telecoms companies. Very recently we were advised that Gigaclear will be supplying fibre broadband to our area by Dec 2019. Individual households can check they are on the roll out by looking on the Superfast Essex website <http://www.superfastessex.org/interactive-maps/rollout-map/> and entering their postcode.

Borehole – Anglian Water (HG)

There has been minimal activity at this location.

Hundred Parishes

The PC maintains membership of The Hundred Parishes which is part of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Rural Crime (all areas) Crime Stoppers 0800 555 111

Fly Tipping Reporting (all areas)

Major incident to the Environment Agency 0800 80 70 60.

Minor incident to Uttlesford DC 01799 510 510

Website

The Parish Council website www.essexinfo.net/littlebardfieldpc is still undergoing development. It provides reference information such as Parish Council Members, Meetings & Minutes, Finance and an on-line Noticeboard.

Another busy period for a bunch of Volunteers!!

Report compiled by Cllr Terry Cutmore and authorised by Little Bardfield Parish Council, April 2018.