

HEMINGFORD ABBOTS PARISH COUNCIL

Report to the Hemingford Abbots Annual Parish Meeting on the activities of the Parish Council in the year May 2014 to May 2015

Councillors and Clerk

The year 2014-5 is the third year of this Council's 4 year term. At the Annual Parish Council meeting, the first meeting of the Council in the year, held on 28 May 2014, Cllr John Peters was elected Chairman, Cllr Bridget Flanagan was elected Vice Chairman and with Cllrs Erika Brown, John Chandler, Pearl Muspratt, Denis Rait and Sally Spowart comprising the full Parish Council.

Mrs Carole Pollock remains as the Parish Council Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

Contact details for Councillors are appended to this report.

Overview

2014-2015 has been another relatively quiet year for Parish Council activity with no major projects of its own currently underway. The continuing routine business of the Council has necessitated the holding of the 10 scheduled monthly meetings with the Council not meeting, as is normal, in either August or December.

Finance

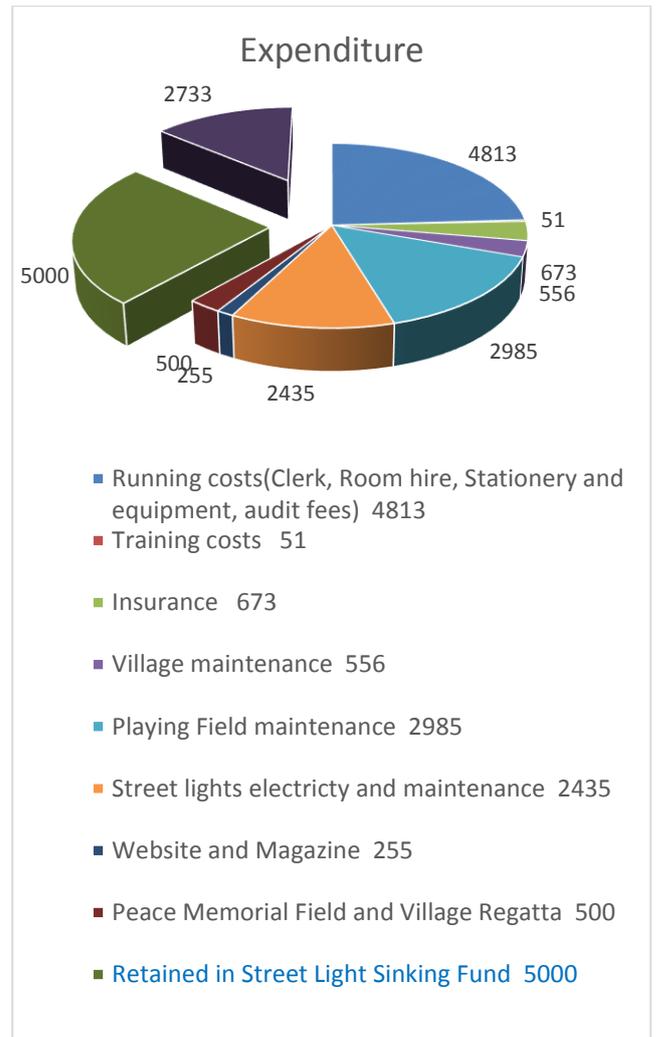
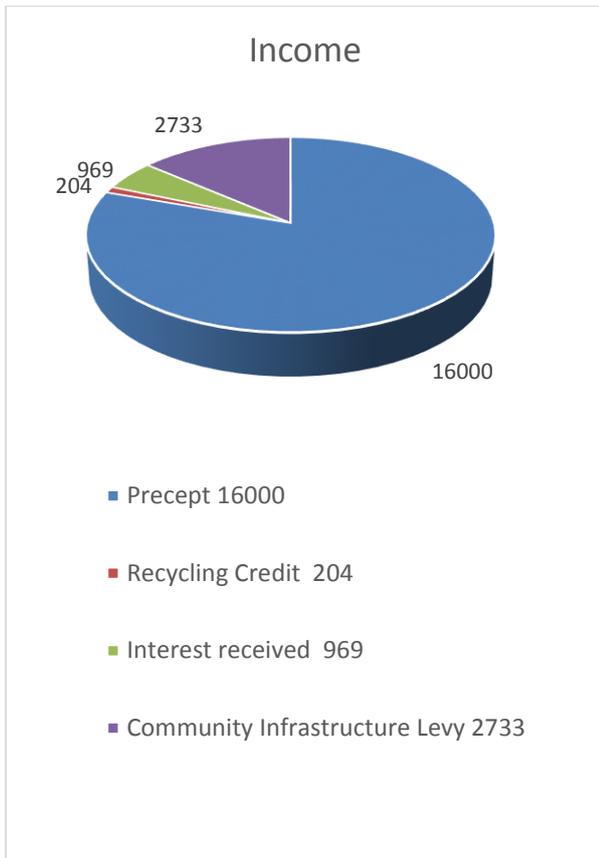
Please be aware that the following comments are based upon the unaudited accounts for the year April 2014 to March 2015

The Precept that had been agreed by the Council for the year was £16000, the same as in the previous year (2013/14). Additional income was received from interest on reserves, a small income from the recycling schemes, including two collections of WEEE arranged by the Parish Council, and £2733 from the recently introduced Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This Levy raises funds from developers undertaking new building projects in the area to pay for infrastructure needed as a result of the development and a small percentage is passed to the Parish Council in whose area the development occurs. Strict rules apply to the way in which the CIL money can be spent by the Parish Council and until it is spent a separate reserve account has been established to hold this money.

The source of the income and how it was expended is shown on the charts below.

Significant costs in the year were, almost £5000 being the cost of running the Parish Council including the Clerks salary, office expenses, meeting room hire and the like and £2400 for the electricity charges for street lighting, a significantly increased cost from the previous year. It should be noted that a liability for around £1000 exists for the street lighting maintenance costs that the supplier failed to invoice before year end and cannot yet be included in the accounts. Repairs to the impact surfacing in the playground were found to be necessary and this accounts for much of the increased cost of the Playing Field maintenance.

As has been noted previously, the Parish Council owns the street lights in the village and a 'Sinking Fund' is being built up to cover the cost of replacement of the lights, estimated at around £60,000 when they reach the end of their life. A sum is included within the budget for each year for this purpose and if there is any residue of income remaining at year end after ensuring that the required sum equal to the precept is retained in General Reserve to cater for unexpected emergencies, then that residue can, by resolution of the Council, be added to the Sinking Fund. In March the Council resolved to transfer a sum of £2320 to the Fund in addition to the £2680 within the budget. The Fund now stands at £42668. With a replacement lamp and column required following the breakage in Common Lane the Council is currently investigating an overall replacement strategy.



The precept for the coming year 2015/16 was set at £16500 an increase of £500 or 3% over the sum set in 2014/15 in large part due to the increased energy charges forecast. This gives a Band D tax rate of £49.55 an increase of £1.65 and this compares favourably with other Parish Councils in the area. The average and median Band D tax for those 61 villages within the HDC area that are not Key Service Centres but who raise a precept is £67.35 and £52.38 respectively. The Hemingford Abbots rate is therefore just 73% of the average and less the median rate.

Planning

The Parish Council remains a statutory consultee on all planning applications directly affecting the Parish and consideration of the applications continues to provide a steady workload for Councillors. This year has seen 22 applications being put before the Council for consideration and comment. There were 15 Full applications for extension or alteration with 5 involving Listed Building Consent, 2 for Listed Building Consent only and 5 for work on trees within the Conservation Area.

The Council was surprised to learn, in late October, from a member of the press that a Committee of the County Council was, on the very next working day, considering a proposal to build a new road across Godmanchester East Common immediately adjacent Common Lane. The proposed road scheme was included in the draft Cambridgeshire Long Term Transport Strategy as the County Council's solution to the transport need of the proposed major housing development at Wyton Airfield. It transpired that there was sufficient opposition to the proposal that a decision was deferred until another meeting 2 weeks later. This gave the opportunity for the Chairman, after consultation with Councillors, to address that meeting and state this Council's most strenuous opposition on sustainability that is environmental and social grounds. Following a further deferment of decision the Chairman again addressed the subsequent Committee meeting reiterating the Council's opposition. Whilst the Transport Strategy adopted no longer shows a specific route the County Council has retained the possibility of building a new road in this location

The Parish Council gave a presentation to a well attended Public Meeting in February on Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) current draft of its Local Plan to 2036. This was arranged in order to gauge residents' opinions to direct the Parish Councils response to HDC's Targeted Consultation then in progress. The overriding concern for residents is the District Councils plan to encourage development of a new town of 4500 houses at Wyton Airfield without any evident solution to the transport problems the development would cause rather than encouraging further development at Alconbury Weald that has appropriate transport connections existing and planned. This concern proved to be common and widespread within the local area and the Parish Council was a joint signatory, along with 13 other Parish Councils and some other organisations, to a letter to Huntingdonshire District Council expressing grave concern on the issues raised.

Village Maintenance

The parish Council continually pressures the higher tiers of local government to carry out those maintenance activities for which they are responsible such as, for example, highway maintenance. The Council also arranges for carrying out the more mundane repairs and renewals for which it is responsible such as clearing vegetation from road signs, hedge trimming, fencing repairs and the like.

After all the many recent excavations for sewer works, Common Lane was resurfaced throughout in July but the County Council had no money to resurface the bridleway across to Houghton. Nevertheless the worst of the dangerous potholes were eventually filled in. There was no money either to repaint the fading double yellow lines but the Parish Council did have more success with the Post Office in getting the postbox repainted.

Other Village Matters

The Parish Council again organised an annual 'Litter Pick' and this year it was held on the 9th February and was well supported. Our thanks are due to all the volunteers who turned out on a Sunday morning to complete what is always a rather disheartening task.

The Parish Council investigated the purchase of a defibrillator and making it available for the benefit of its residents and visitors. The purchase was to be dependent on sufficient number of residents, other than Councillors, coming forward to volunteer to be trained in its use and maintenance. Regrettably no-one volunteered and the purchase did not proceed.

During the year residents have drawn the attention of the Parish Council to several issues of concern to them including perceived traffic speeds, highway drainage, large stones and overhanging growth on highway verges and problems of dog fouling and the Parish Council has taken action within the limits of its powers, duties and obligations.

Hemingford Abbots Playing Field

The Parish Council continues as the Administrative Trustee of the Playing Field and as well as arranging for the maintenance of the grass and hedges also arranges for the required independent annual safety inspection of the play equipment and continues to carry out a weekly visual inspection of both the Field and the equipment..

The impact surfacing to the web climber was extended to meet with the current standards. This had been the subject of a dispute with the original contractor and due to that contractor's insolvency the Parish Council was required to now meet the cost of the work.

Particular thanks are due to our Tree Warden, Mr Les Spowart, for sourcing and planting additional hedging 'whips' in the Royal Oak boundary hedge

Council Representatives

The Council is fortunate to have a number of volunteers who carry out specific tasks or represent it on outside bodies and we shall hear from them shortly with their reports to this meeting. Our thanks are due to all of them.

In conclusion

The Parish Council carries out its duties throughout the year on behalf of all the electors of the Parish. Councillors are available for 15 minutes prior to the start of each Parish Council meeting should any Parishioner wish to raise with the Council any matter of relevance to the Parish. Parishioners also have an opportunity at the start of every Parish Council meeting to make their contribution to any item on the Agenda of the meeting.

Parish Council meetings are open to everyone and all are very welcome to attend.

Finally; it has been my privilege to serve as Chairman of the Parish Council during the past year but of course the Council is very much a team effort. Sincere thanks are due to the Vice Chairman, to fellow Councillors and of course to our Clerk, who continues to carry out her work with enthusiasm and efficiency.

John Peters

Chairman, Hemingford Abbots Parish Council

Appendix

Hemingford Abbots Parish Council – Contact details

Clerk to the Council:

To whom any correspondence for the attention of the Council should be addressed

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Clerk to the Parish Council
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HUNTINGDON
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Parish Councillors may be contacted as follows:

Erika Brown	01480 465138	
John Chandler	01480 462053	
Bridget Flanagan	01480 465370	Vice-Chairman
Pearl Muspratt	01480 467818	
John Peters	01480 496464	Chairman
Denis Rait	01480 454571	
Sally Spowart	01480 461165	