

HEMINGFORD ABBOTS PARISH COUNCIL

Report to the Hemingford Abbots Annual Parish Meeting on the activities of the Parish Council in the year May 2016 to May 2017

Councillors and Clerk

At the Annual Parish Council meeting, the first meeting of the Council in the year, held on 11th May 2016, Cllr John Peters was elected Chairman, Cllr Bridget Flanagan and Cllr Erika Brown were elected Vice Chairman and welcomed to the Council were Cllrs Alun Jones and Christine Nichol. Disappointingly and despite the Parish Council having sought to encourage residents to consider serving their village as a Parish Councillor only those above named had stood for election and been elected unopposed. The necessary steps were then taken during May and June to fill the two vacancies on the Council and after due process Cllrs Pearl Muspratt and Marcus Whewell were co-opted onto the Council.

Contact details for Councillors are appended to this report.

Overview

The routine business of the Council has necessitated the holding of the 10 scheduled monthly meetings and 3 extra-ordinary meetings with, as is normal, ordinary meetings not being held in either August or December.

On planning issues, the number of Full and Householder Applications put to the Council was down by 50% compared to the previous year. In the wider field, HDC's Local Plan to 2036 is still not published more than 5 years since its initiation.

For District Council purposes the Local Government Boundary Commission has split Hemingford Abbots from Grey and placed it together with The Offords in a ward with the town of Godmanchester and having 3 district Councillors. This completely ignores the case put forward by the Parish Council and is contrary to the statute under which the Commission operates that states that it "must have regard to the desirability of not breaking local ties". (Para 3(b) (ii) of Sch 2 to the Act). A formal complaint on this matter has been raised.

Finance

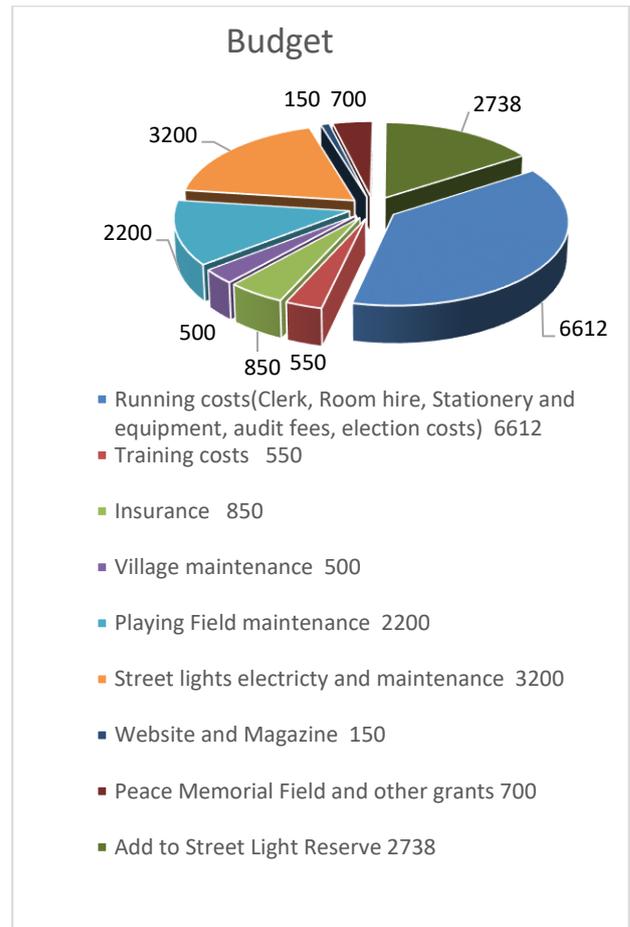
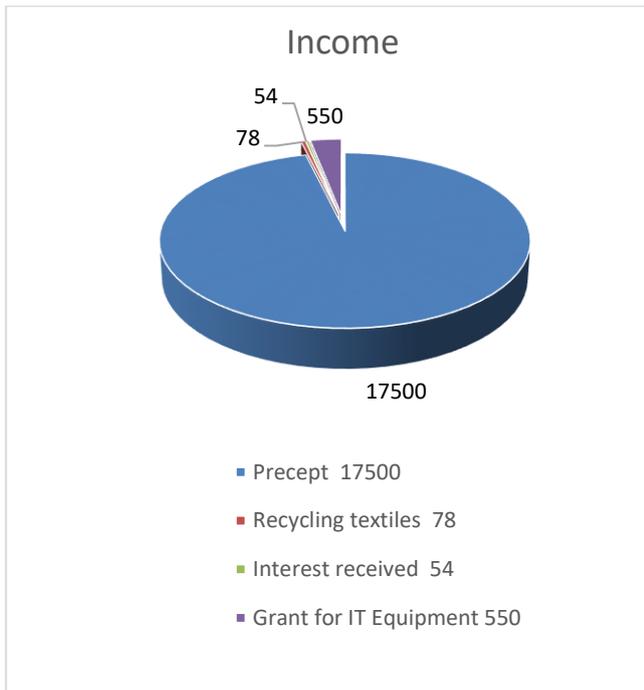
Please be aware that the following comments are based upon the unaudited accounts for the year April 2015 to March 2016

The Precept that had been agreed by the Council for the year was £17500, an increase of £1000 from the previous year (2015/16). Additional income of £681.87 was received from interest on reserves, a very small income from recycling schemes and a grant towards the cost of new IT equipment.

The Parish Council is required to use the cash accounting method that means only invoices received and authorised appear as expenditure. The funds to meet liabilities known to exist remains in the Council's reserves. Costs incurred included £5797 being the cost of running the Parish Council including the Clerk's salary, office expenses, meeting room hire and the like, £2719 partial cost for the electricity and maintenance charges for street lighting,

The most significant expenditure during the year was slightly over £26,000, taken from reserves, being a progress payment for work carried out to date on the replacement LED street lights. The overall cost will be £28300 that will include the approximately £2000 cost of replacing and reconnecting the two columns in Common Lane demolished by person or persons unknown. As reported last year the Parish Council has been building up a sinking fund to cover the cost of the inevitable replacement of this asset. At this time, the existing columns have been retained but eventually they too will need to be replaced. The residue of the sinking fund is retained and indeed needs to be added to each year against the cost of future replacements.

Due to the accounting method and the non-presentation of invoices it is more appropriate to demonstrate the costs that were expected in the year and thus the following chart represents the Parish Council's Budget.



The precept for the coming year 2017/18 was set at £17500 with no increase over the sum set in 2016/17. This gives a Band D tax rate of £52.24 pa which compares favourably with other Parish Councils in the area. The average and median Band D tax for those 71 villages within the HDC area that are not Key Service Centres but who raise a precept is £77.95 and £54.85 respectively. The Hemingford Abbots rate is therefore just 2/3 of the average and still less than the median rate.

Planning

Planning Applications

The Parish Council remains a consultee on all planning applications directly affecting the Parish and consideration of the applications made is an item on the agenda of most of the Council's regular monthly meetings. This year 16 full applications were made within the Parish, 3 were subsequently withdrawn and the 13 remaining applications comprised, 2 Full Applications 1 for new build and 1 for demolition and new build both recommended for approval by the Parish Council, 4 Householder Applications for extensions, 1 with later amendment, 4 miscellaneous applications and 1 for change of use. Of the Householder Applications 1 was recommended for approval and 2 plus the amendment were recommended for refusal. Huntingdonshire District Council approved all the applications. The decision on Householder Applications is delegated by Huntingdonshire District Council to its Officers and whilst they make note of the Parish Council's reasons for recommending approval or refusal they do not record the reasons for disagreement with them. There were also 18 applications for work to trees including for felling and removal within the conservation area. Whilst the number of full and householder applications considered were down by 50% compared to previous years, those for work to trees were about the same.

HDC Local Plan to 2036

The Parish Council arranged, in concert with other local Parish Councils and others, a meeting with HDC District Councillors and their Officers in November seeking to ascertain HDC's programme for the preparation of its Local Plan to 2036 and to have some influence upon its content. One issue that was important at that time was the proposed development of 4500 houses at RAF Wyton and how the traffic

generated would be catered for – in the Parish Council's view maybe the right development but in wholly the wrong place. Subsequently it seems the inability to provide a viable solution for the traffic problem has led to the removal of the development, at least for the time being, from the current draft of the Local Plan.

Village Projects and Maintenance

As noted above, the major project to replace the street lights came to fruition and some repair and maintenance has been carried out to the play equipment in the Playing Field.

The previous year's project for the installation of Vehicle Actuated Signs has yielded valuable information on the speed of traffic entering the village on Rideaway and on the High Street. In March 2017, in the High Street 25% of vehicles exceeded the 30 mph limit despite having been subject to the speed limit through Hemingford Grey. 45 vehicles (0.1%) were recorded at 50mph or more. In Rideaway, 38% of vehicles exceeded the 30 mph limit and 118 (0.9%) were recorded as exceeding 50mph.

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.

Other Village Matters

The Parish Council once again organised an annual 'Litter Pick' during February. The thanks of all residents are due to all the volunteers who turned out on a Sunday morning to collect up the depressingly large quantity of items mostly discarded from passing traffic.

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 its own weekly visual inspections. As noted above cleaning and maintenance of the play equipment has been carried out during the year.

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.

One omission is that of Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. Whilst not its obligation, the Parish Council has sponsored Neighbourhood Watch, providing some funding for its direct expenses on the limited occasions that this has been necessary. The position of Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, however, remains vacant as, to date, not one of our 500 or so residents has felt able to volunteer for this position.

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 resident wish to raise with the Council any matter of relevance to the Parish. Members of the public 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 for the past eight years. The Council is very much a team effort and my sincere thanks are due to the Vice Chairmen, to fellow Councillors, past and present, who have served the Parish and, of course, to our Clerk, Mrs Carole Pollock, on whose support we rely and who has never failed 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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Parish Councillors may be contacted as follows:

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Bridget Flanagan	01480 465370
Alun Jones	01480 469818
Pearl Muspratt	01480 467818
Christine Nichol	01480 300185
John Peters	01480 496464
Marcus Whewell	01480 464293