

PARISH REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2020/21

The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council comprised of 10 members in the year 2020/21, namely:

Cllr. Mike Smith (Chairman)	Cllr John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
Cllr . Catherine Hammon	Cllr. Kay Jancey
Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr.. Helen McCash
Cllr. David Stock	Cllr. Emma Waltham

Last year I highlighted that the Parish Council would meet by Zoom until further notice, well, the time has come and we are to meet 'full frontal' as opposed to 'upper body' on May the 20th.. I am sure we will be on our best behaviour and congratulate ourselves that it was **Handforth Parish Council** that went viral on social media and not us!

Quite what the arrangements will be for public participation I'm not sure.

The village seems to have survived Covid reasonably intact and we are indebted to our village outlets for keeping us well and safely supplied during the last year. Almost to a fault folk were courteous and mindful of the requirement to maintain social distancing and step aside where necessary although this sometimes develops into a dance, a bit like Strictly without the costumes and hair styles.

It has been our good fortune to be blessed with a variety of walks around Watton particularly on the north side of the village where the fast maturing of Jubilee Wood shields us from the by- pass and directs our view down the steep bank onto the river Beane meandering its way through some ancient woodland with patches of snowdrops, celandines, anemones and just now bluebells emerging. My hope is that this renewed interest in the local environment will encourage us to give nature a helping hand.

For our part Council agreed it would be a fitting gesture to plant a new tree on the Meadow. A Holm Oak was chosen and was planted on the 5th March with children from the School in attendance on their last day of lockdown before returning to school full time.

Certainly the allotments have seen a steep rise in interest spurred on no doubt by every other TV program being garden orientated. The allotments are on Glebe land leased from the Church Commissioners under a raft of conditions. This has led to the Parish Council having to reign in the individualism displayed in the plethora of enhancements to horticultural best practice.

Experience has taught us that when enthusiasm wains, our cash drains as we clear plots ready for re-letting.

The Neighbourhood plan has waded through reams of planning considerations and as we speak a brochure should be coming your way which is to all intents and purposes the document going to East Herts Council for inclusion in the District Plan. Please take a look and comment as you see fit.

These comments will be recorded for reference and may be referred to under examination. The next phase will lead to a referendum on its adoption. For more information see: www.was-np.org

Much of Parish Council business continues in the background with regulatory requirements being met. Our dealings with District and County Councils have had to rely on replies by email and is to a degree disjointed as staff are home working. We have considered 32 planning applications and have concurred with 31 of the decisions.

By June the 21st the newly elected County Council will be installed and open for business and, if the famous Road Map is to be believed, things will be nearly back to normal. This is an overdue reward for the patience and consideration shown in Watton-at-Stone.

Thank You

Mike Smith (Chairman)