

PARISH REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2021/22

The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council comprised of 10 members in the year 2021/22, 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

In memory of Dennis Filer

Some of us will remember Dennis from his days as a Parish Councillor as chairman of budget and finance. He patiently led us through the intricacies of finance and insurance in the days when interest rates were interesting. He served the Council for almost 20 years

Beyond this he was a Captain of industry heading up ICI Europe, but closer to his heart, a Colonel in the Territorial Army, the highest rank achievable and one which, although entitled, he never used.

He was one of life's Gentlemen and I for one feel privileged to have known him.

He died at home on Monday the 2nd of May.

It goes without saying that our deepest sympathy lies with Pam, his Wife, and family.

This meeting concludes the third year of the Civic cycle, elections next year, so what's been happening?

The Neighbourhood plan enters its final stages, it will now go to the District Council for comment/revision/approval before the final vote for adoption or not by the village. A simple majority will decide. It must be recorded that the dedication given to the cause by Catherine and Emma has gone above and beyond reasonable expectation. Thank you both.

Even before the Neighbourhood Plan came proposals for the 'improvements to the A602'. Hopefully it will get finished this year at tremendous cost, presumably it will be an improvement!

But closer to home our pathways have seen improvements with dropped kerbs and tactile crossing points for the less able. We still have parking issues in Rectory lane and regular reports of speeding in the high street to which end a grant for a SID (Speed indicator device) has been applied for.

We have also seen excellent remedial work done to paths on the Hockerill slope. John raised the issue of poor footpath lighting leading from the Bull to Rivershill. Solar lighting has been installed.

The Lammas and its bordering woodland including the maturing Jubilee Wood have proved very popular during the pandemic. The Steps have been restored by Steve and Kay, thanks for that and also thanks to the Countryside Management Services for repairing the hand rail on the steeper section of the path.

Frank Cooper and sons are now responsible for ALL grass and shrub management in the Meadow.

Stanley Agriculture are looking after the Lammas, Watton Green and the Meadow hedges.

Litter. It is easy to blame the commercial outlets and perhaps they could do more but at the end of the day the consumer is responsible for disposal of packaging, the trouble is they are NOT responsible. I begin to wonder if more and more bins IS the answer? Any ideas ?

On the bright side there has been a group request for litter picking equipment, which was provided, one of the family's children are doing D of E. and it's noticeable where they have been.

Our biggest venture this year has been the refurbishment of the play area with new equipment and is proving to be very popular. It was funded by New Homes Bonas funds from previous developments and a grant from the Stevenage Community trust fund.

The Allotment Holders have a new tenancy agreement in an attempt to exercise some control over the proliferation of plant shelters which because of their temporary nature, end up being a significant cost to the Council when a tenant moves on.

The Defibrillator has been used, to what effect is unclear but new signage has been displayed.

Having been involved in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012 and held in MUD MEADOW,

I was slightly less enthusiastic about being involved in the Platinum Jubilee. However, as I won't be seeing another Jubilee and preparations are in hand.

Similarly, I will be stepping down from the Parish Council as of September this year.

I would like to see the Neighbourhood Plan on deposit with the District Council and I would like to get some resolution as to football and Mill Lane and perhaps the Beane. New owners of the Mill seem keen to help and who knows, we may even get pedestrian access over the narrow bridge.

So, if you are or know someone who has shown an interest in joining the council, now would be a good opportunity to step forward or sound them out.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their support over, not just the last year, but for years past. Also my thanks to Jane (Clerk), She may not be the captain but she certainly steers the ship!

Sincerely

Mike Smith (Chairman)