

PARISH REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2011/12

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council is made up of ten elected members.

Mr. Mike Smith(Chairman)	Mr. John Meischke(Vice-Chairman)
Ms. Emma Waltham (co-opted)	Mrs. Christine Dinnin
Mr. Denis Filer	Mr. Iain Harris
Mr. Ian Knight	Mrs. Helen McCash
Mr. Nigel Poulton	Mr. David Stock

The Parish Council, whilst sorry to lose the longstanding services of Mr. Charles Clark, was very pleased at being able to co-opt Ms. Emma Waltham. Emma has brought a new dimension to our meetings.

The Parish Council met on the third Tuesday of eleven months during the civic year.

Three Sub-Committees meet as and when necessary, where they discuss issues and make recommendations to the full Council.

The Budget and Finance Sub-Committee, chaired by Mr. Denis Filer, produced a forward budget for the year, which has allowed us to operate with only a 0.3% increase in the Parish precept. A substantial saving was made in our insurance costs for the coming years. Several extra-ordinary costs are to be met from reserves. A 'New Homes Bonus' will give the council considerable future funds and various capital expenditures are being listed.

The Environment Sub-Committee, chaired by Mrs Christine Dinnin, has had a busy year. The loss of the £1000 Parish Paths grant has impacted on our maintenance grass-cutting budget. Discussions concerning the oak tree on the sportsfield have taken eight months to resolve and will cost some £2500 in the next financial year. A new lease for the allotments has been agreed at a cost of some £920. (tenants will now have to pay for water usage). On the bright side, a revival of the Horticultural Show by the Watton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association was deemed a success and attended by Mike Smith and Christine Dinnin.

The Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee, chaired by Mr Ian Knight has done sterling work in maintaining the sportsfield and co-ordinating its usage. A maintenance program for the coming year has been agreed. The Glaxo Volunteers have painted play equipment and completed other projects in the village. A volunteer group has been formed with the intention of raising funds for play area enhancement in conjunction with the Council. We have also agreed to install gates for the Great Innings play area.

Planning, coordinated by Mr Iain Harris, has commented on some 20 applications. Among these were the Station Road Development where concerns were raised over future maintenance. Building continues apace. We saw a second Wind Turbine application rejected but we have now been given notice that a written appeal has been lodged. We also lost our 'hard copy' plans in favour of internet-based plans.

Members of the Parish Council form the Trustees of the Community hall and supervise ongoing maintenance and policy thereof. It is in receipt of a yearly grant from the Parish Council of some £5930. Hiring's and miscellaneous grants form the bulk of income to cover running costs.

The Council has regular dialogue with the police and attended the Policing Plan 2012 launch. We also attended the East Herts Rural Parish conference and meetings concerning the Local Development Framework.

The Parish Council has commented on the Parking / Transport survey, the Waste Site allocations consultation and the Proposals to Empower Town and parish Councils.

The Parish Council made donations to the Royal British Legion and the River Beane Association. We also awarded to Anna Whittle of Watton Primary School, the 'Good Citizens Award and the Scout and Guides 'Outstanding Effort Award' went to Lara Cakebread.

The Parish Council has representatives on the Memorial Hall Management Committee, the Scout and Guide group, the Sports and Social Club, the River Beane Restoration Association, the Police Authority, the Pre School Play Group, The Allotment and Gardeners Association and the Watton Youth Drop-in.

The Parish Council hopes to adopt its new Code of Conduct at its first meeting of the new civic year.

Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

The Parish Council has, with generous funding from Barratt Homes, planted six Elm trees on the Lammas and has organised entertainments for a Village Picnic on June 3rd. Groups from within the village are organising competitions and entertainment with live music throughout the afternoon.

I want to thank all Councillors for their support and efforts over the past year. Special thanks go to John who so ably stood in for me and Jane, our clerk, who always seems to be there.

Mike Smith (Chairman)