

**PARISH REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2017/1**

**The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council comprised of 10 members in the year 2017/18, namely:**

Mr. Mike Smith(Chairman)	Mr. John Meischke(Vice-Chairman)
Dr. Emma Waltham	Mrs. Christine Dinnin
Mr. Denis Filer	Mrs. Catherine Hammon
Mr. Ian Knight	Mrs. Helen McCash
Mrs. Margaret Stanley	Mr. David Stock

When people ask me ‘what do Parish Councils do’, I tell them, tongue in cheek, it’s mostly lampposts and dog owners! But it has a ring of truth this year, we ran an extensive publicity campaign concerning dog fouling and have agreed in principal to update our street lights to LED as part of an agreement to hand them over to the County Council who will maintain them forthwith. It comes at a cost of £7500 but it will break even in 6 to 7 years.

One thing I was hoping not to be referring to again is the High Street and Station Road, it was not to be. Although both schemes are for the most part complete, they are dogged by ineffectiveness and poor workmanship, so the saga continues.

After much debate concerning worrying behaviour around the Community Hall we decided that perhaps CCTV might be beneficial. It worried us that it might displace problems elsewhere, but parishioners view it favourably and it was installed at a cost of some £3000.

The popular decision to provide a defibrillator in the village has now been completed. What seemed to be simple in principle turned in to a bureaucratic marathon when the decision to locate it in the redundant BT telephone kiosk required us to apply for change of use consent and listed building consent! However, it is now registered and good to go if required.

Although not strictly council business the future of the Station and rail services has concerned many rail users, not least some of our Councillors. We are deeply indebted to Mike Freeman, our District Councillor, for pursuing this with great determination to seek clarity at least. Sadly, Mike is somewhat under the weather at the moment, but we all wish him well

The Neighbourhood Plan moves steadily forward after a year of delay concerning whether it or the District Council would be releasing Green Belt. However, in October The Inspector appointed to examine the district plan was in no doubt that it would be the District Council as only it can alter Green Belt boundaries through the plan. A village wide policy is now being drafted, if these accord with the overarching district plan, it will be put to referendum in the autumn.

2017 saw the completion of the new tennis court and associated landscaping. It looked so good that a decision has been made to upgrade the much used original court with new fencing to match. Grants of some £37,000 were allocated from ‘Green Space development’ funds accruing from the Gatekeeper development. This was the last tranche of monies from that fund and new money was allocated from the New Homes Bonus for the new fencing.

Similarly, New Homes Bonus funds are assisting the Cricket Club to construct all weather cricket practice nets on the meadow.

Many thanks must go to Cllr. David Stock who, despite initially saying “never again”, has spent an incalculable amount of time on the design and structure of our new website. This also involved the updating of information, re-writing where necessary and providing new photographs as appropriate; all of which involved many hours of painstaking work. He worked closely with Beanebytes (a local web design company) who carried out the detailed design work, built the site and provided additional images. Thank you David.

A new memorial seat has been placed on Watton Green at the request and expense of the family of Jeff Monk, a well loved village character providing taxying services within the Village.

Sadly, this is not the only request for a memorial seat. Another much loved village character, Ted Brown, will be sadly missed by his family and friends **and** by the parish council. Ted took his duties as “keeper of the Meadow” very seriously and will be sorely missed.

The parish council has had its own loss in that a long standing and faithful councillor, Denis Filer has retired at a grand age. For 20 years he has kept us on the straight and narrow financially as Chairman of budget and finance, despite my best efforts to the contrary. We are now in the process of adopting a new councillor.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their dedication and support throughout the year. It would be impossible without you.

I usually, at this point, thank Jane for all her efforts over the last year but this year it’s considerably more significant as Jane has been Clerk to the Parish Council for 25 years. So, I think I should thank her on behalf not just of those present but also on behalf of Councillors past. Jane has a memory and depth of knowledge without which we would often find ourselves going round in circles.

Jane, on behalf of Watton-at-Stone Parish Council THANK YOU, for the last 25 years and long may it last.

**Mike Smith (Chairman)**