



*Woolmer Green Parish Council
Annual Report 2017/18*





Woolmer Green Parish Council

Woolmer Green Parish Council was established in 2000 following its separation from Welwyn Parish. The Council has six Parish Councillors who are unpaid volunteers that live in the village and are dedicated to serving their community. Councillors serve a four year term of office and the current term will end in May 2019 when elections will be held if more than six candidates are nominated.

Parish Councillors

Andy Gribble, Chairman

Transport, Staffing Committee, Young Person Liaison. Administers Badminton Smash Up.

Phil Corke, Vice Chairman

Planning, Staffing Committee. Chairman of the School Friends Association.

Sarah Hall

Finance, Staffing Committee & Allotment Liaison. Treasurer of the Allotment Committee.

Jenny Hawkins

Parish Council grounds.

Grant Pinney

Village Hall, Community

Tony White

Environment. A director of Twin Foxes Management Ltd.

Parish Clerk, Janet Pearce.

The Parish Clerk holds the statutory office of the Proper Officer of the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer. The Clerk is not an elected member but an employee who is responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Council, managing its finances and facilities and ensuring it complies with the law.

During the year some Councillors and the Clerk attended planning training arranged by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and training on the new General Data Protection Regulations arranged by the Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Borough Councillors

Councillors Julie Cragg, Steve Markiewicz and Roger Trigg.

Your Borough Councillors hold regular Surgeries in Woolmer Green Village Hall where anyone is welcome to attend if they have an issue they want to discuss. In 2018 the Surgeries will be held on 2nd June, 4th August, 6th October and 1st December 10.00am-10.45am. A Parish Councillor will also be in attendance.

County Councillor

Councillor Richard Smith.

Member of Parliament

Grant Shapps MP



Hall & Grounds

The two large feature windows at each end of the hall were replaced with aluminium frames as the existing wooden frames were showing signs of rot. The total cost of this major project was £11,671.66.

A door barrier was fitted beside the front door of the hall to prevent the right hand door being opened to its full extent as this had regularly damaged the door closer and finger guard. A previous solution of a door stop had led to the door hinges breaking and damaging the door which had to be repaired. This constant problem has now been resolved.

The wedding license was renewed for a further three years.

A new water urn was purchased for the hall kitchen when the previous urn failed the PAT test.

The Council agreed to switch gas and electricity supplier at the end of the current contract with E On in July 2018. It agreed a three year contract with British Gas which provided the cheapest quotation and included a £300 cash back incentive and a free boiler service.

Eight new six foot trestle tables and four four foot tables were purchased for use in the hall. They will also benefit the market and village day. They replaced the unwieldy heavy wooden tables that were donated to the Enfield Youth Rugby Team.

Incidents of illegal fly tipping in the hall grounds increased and included a table, chairs, carpet, wood, toys, building and garden waste. Councillors Pinney and Hawkins transported much of the waste to the recycling centre.

An emergency incident occurred on the morning of Election Day on June 8th when an unattended bag was found in the hall corridor. The police were called for advice and they quickly despatched an armed response team who evacuated the building before declaring the bag safe. The bag belonged to a student and the police returned it to them.

The Parish Council, via its solicitor, gave written permission to the residents of Wolves Mere, Wolves Croft and Strawplaiters Close to use their rear gates to directly access the hall grounds without establishing a permanent right of way. This procedure will be repeated every five years. Arrangements will be made with Twin Foxes Residents Association to close the public access gate for one day a year in order to preclude the establishment of a permanent right of way from the estate onto Parish Council land.

Environment

One set of swings that were sited away from the main play area in the Garden Road playground were removed and two new infant swing seats were fitted to the main swings.

The Spider climbing frame was sandblasted and repainted red. The total cost of the project was £2,460 and the Council is very grateful to County Councillor Richard Smith who contributed £1,230 from his Locality Budget.

Having resurfaced one third of Bridger's Path during 2016/17 it was decided it would be most cost effective to resurface the remaining two thirds this year rather than over two years. The grant application to the Parish Paths Partnership was successful and £1,000 was awarded. The Parish Council and the Rights of Way Officer equally shared the remaining cost of £1,730. The total cost of the project was £2,730.



Planning

Woolmer Green Parish Council met with Knebworth Parish Council to discuss the impact of that the scale of development proposed in the North Herts and Welwyn Hatfield's Local Plans will have on our villages. Both Councils agreed to engage the services of a planning consultant to represent them at the relevant Local Plan Hearing Sessions.

The planning inspector's initial conclusion of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan was that it is unsound but he was confident that further work could produce a sound plan. Since the Local Plan was drafted the assessed housing need has increased from 12,500 to 16,000. Promoting an employment growth strategy when the Local Plan does not meet its housing need, thereby supplying the corresponding additional workforce, is under scrutiny.

Woolmer Green Parish Council will continue to argue that there are no exceptional circumstances that justify developing Green Belt in the village when there are previously developed sites in Woolmer Green being promoted for housing. The Parish Council met with Grant Shapps MP who said the Council has a good case and would "back them all the way" and that "building on Green Belt should be the absolute last resort."

On Wednesday 21st February the planning consultant represented Woolmer Green at Hearing Session 3 which focused on the local economy and employment development. The Planning Inspector posed the question as to whether some sites, including EA10 (Entech/Marshalls/Lessiters/Cawdor) should be restricted to employment use and, specifically, whether EA10 had been appropriately defined. Our representative argued that the promoted employment sites in the village should be developed for mixed use to include housing and small scale business that is appropriate for a village location.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, on the recommendation of the planning inspector, has commissioned a Green Belt Review that will analyse which areas of Green Belt are important to conserve. Once this is completed Hearing Session 4 will take place to focus on individual locations and the Parish Council is expecting that there will be a session specifically to discuss Woolmer Green.

The Parish Council responded to nineteen planning applications and one planning appeal during 2017/18.





Transport

The grade II listed mile post in London Road was repainted under the Herts County Council Highways Together Scheme by village volunteer Reece Wood. He also generously repainted three further mile posts in Welwyn Parish. Grateful thanks to County Councillor Richard Smith who paid for the project from his Highways Locality Budget.

County Councillor Richard Smith's bid to the Police and Crime Commissioners Road Safety Fund was successful. This will pay for a feasibility study on the B197 between the motorway roundabout at Oaklands and Woolmer Green's northern boundary and is due to take place during the spring of 2018. It is hoped that the study will identify road safety measures that would slow down traffic in the village.

The speed of traffic along the B197 continues to be of major concern to residents and the school. The Parish Council has recorded five accidents along London Road and two in Heath road between September 2017 and February 2018.

Consultations

The Parish Council responded to the following consultations:

Welwyn Hatfield Community Validation Checklist Consultation

Herts County Council's "The future of children's centres, health visiting and school nursing in Hertfordshire" Consultation

National Association of Local Council's response to "Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places"

2018/19 Local Government Finance Settlement Consultation.

Herts County Council's School Admissions Consultation 2019/20





Community

The Parish Council met with Knebworth FC at the end of the first season that the club had used the Parish Council's football facilities. All agreed that the arrangements had been mutually beneficial and will continue.

Wheels on Woolmer Green took place again on May Bank Holiday Monday. 164 cars were on show and £435 was raised and divided equally between Prostate Cancer UK and the Herts Air Ambulance.

Village Day proved very popular again in 2017. There were many rides and attractions as well as a demonstration by the Nifflheim Siberian Husky Racing Team. There was a Swing Train dance demonstration and members of the public joined in. A pet competition was also held with a number of dogs taking part along with ferrets and a tortoise. We were very grateful to Attimore vet, Marianne Dorn, for coming along to do the judging.

Councillors attended the wreath laying ceremony on Remembrance Day and £50 was donated to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Brownies and Girl Guides were asked to submit ideas for the Parish Council 2017 Christmas card. Four images were chosen for the card's design and a £5 gift voucher was awarded to each of the winners.

The annual Carols Around the Pond event was well attended on Christmas Eve where the Woolmer Green Band accompanied the singing. The church raised £191.47 for the Children's Society charity.

Debbie, the market manager, and her assistant Lisa, stepped down at the end of 2017 and we thank them for all their hard work over the past five years. A new team has taken over, Tracie & Tara. They successfully completed a level 2 hygiene course in January and bring lots of enthusiasm and new ideas to the market.

A community Rock 'n' Roll evening, featuring a live band, took place in March and thanks go to Cllr Pinney for organising the event.

£100 was donated to the school to contribute to a memorial bench in memory of former head teacher Mr Brendan Mallon who passed away in April 2017.

£750 was donated to the church to contribute towards the maintenance of the churchyard.

£170 was donated to Wickfield Community Centre to contribute towards the purchase of carpet bowls equipment.

Grateful thanks to all the volunteers that have helped the Parish Council throughout the year.

Statement of Accounts

2016/17	Receipts:	2017/18
49,509.95	Hall Lettings	43,612.58
6,397.97	Children' Centre	6,652.58
360.00	Security	600.00
1,969.27	Pitch Fees	1,819.27
515.00	Bar	460.00
585.00	Farmers' Market Income	567.50
1,875.60	Car Park	2,094.45
525.45	Allotments	533.24
153.36	Interest on Investments	164.15
693.66	Council Tax Support Grant	296.12
	Entertainment Fund :	
853.70	Village Day	715.00
429.00	Advertising	636.00
667.86	Other	728.30
3,948.00	Other income	2,580.00
68,483.82	TOTAL RECEIPTS	61,459.19
	Payments:	
36,328.70	Payroll	35,465.45
	Hall Maintenance :	
4,119.56	Rates	0
3,836.75	Insurance	3,725.00
4,781.14	Water, Gas, Electricity, Waste	6,719.73
4,857.80	License, Safety, Supplies	4,038.39
	Grounds Maintenance :	
7,357.26	Grounds	4,895.84
1,620.88	Playgrounds	3,330.00
519.77	Allotments	533.24
1,192.50	Office Expenses	1,207.50
150.00	Publicity	150.00
375.00	Audit & legal fees	1,107.10
774.73	HAPTC, CDA, CPRE	809.08
1,479.00	Grants	1,106.82
799.50	Sundry Expenses	668.75
	Entertainment Fund :	
1,056.23	Village Day	337.64
438.00	Newsletter	645.00
200.00	Other	532.00
	Non Recurring Payments:	
9,541.00	Hall Maintenance	4,319.44
-	Hall Floor	1,000.00
-	Hall Windows	11,671.66
-	Wedding License	1,300.00
2,200.91	Curtains	-
691.38	Hand Driers	-
759.11	Benches	-
575.17	Election	0
998.00	PPP	1,865.00
0	Contingency	0
84,652.39	TOTAL PAYMENTS	85,427.64
-16,168.57	Income less Expenses	-23,968.45
24,260.00	Precept	24,721.00
8,091.43	Surplus	752.55
44,237.78	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	52,329.21
52,329.21	TOTAL FUND	53,081.76

