

Little Bardfield Parish Council



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To: All Residents of Little Bardfield Parish

Subject: Parish Council Report 2018/2019

Please find enclosed an activity report from your Parish Council for the period:
April 2018 – March 2019.

I hope that you will find it to be of interest and to share it with all members of your family.

This year we commissioned and populated a new Parish Website:

www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk

which covers many subject areas including the early history of your Parish.

With kind regards

Councillor William Gardiner
Chairman
Little Bardfield Parish Council

Little Bardfield Parish Council - 2018/2019 Report

This report summarises the activities of the Parish Council for the 12 months from April 2018 to March 2019.

Purpose

Little Bardfield Parish Council represents the interests of its residents, mainly to Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council. It also endeavours to preserve the rural nature of our area. The Councillors act jointly and individually, as required, to achieve these objectives.

Composition of the Parish Council

Little Bardfield Parish comprises three separate areas: Little Bardfield village (LB), Hawkspur Green (HG) to the north and Oxen End (OE) to the south, all within Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and Essex County Council (ECC). Ideally each of the three areas need representation.

Uttlesford District Council assigns five positions as Councillors to form the volunteer (unpaid) Little Bardfield Parish Council (PC).

At Election time, if more than five candidate's names are registered with UDC then a full election is held. If five names or less are registered, then those names registered are elected as unopposed and the balance to make up to five positions is filled by co-option.

The five persons named below were re-elected in the May 2019 Elections.

Current Parish Council Membership (PC)

Cllr William Gardiner (Chairman), LB

Cllr Terry Cutmore (Vice Chairman), HG

Cllr Clare Beeston, HG

Cllr Andrew Davies, LB

Cllr Colin Simpson, OE

Supported by:

Parish Clerk: Miss Delia Scott

Uttlesford District Council, (UDC) Cllr Simon Howell

Essex County Council, (ECC) Cllr Simon Walsh

Essex Association of Local Councils: www.ealc.gov.uk

At the end of May 2019, Miss Delia Scott, Parish Clerk, will be leaving us.

At the beginning of June 2019, Ms. Liz Williamson, will be joining us as Parish Clerk

Parish Council Meetings

Council Meetings are normally held four times per year. The Annual Parish or General Meeting is held in May. Additional meetings may be held, as required, to review Planning Applications.

Minutes of meetings are published on the three Notice Boards and can be viewed on the Parish website: www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk

Venue: Parish Council Meetings were held in St Katherines Church on:

2018: AGM May 14, September 24, November 12.

2019: March 11.

Scheduled 2019/20 dates:

2019: AGM May 13, September 9 and November 11.

2020: March 9

There is frequent E-mail correspondence between Parish, District and County Councillors.

Items addressed during this period:

Finance (PC)

1. Our finances operate in three separate accounts.
 - Treasurers Account is funded from the annual Precept or local tax, which is part of the Council Tax, and is used for day-to-day operations,
 - Reserve Account is a sub section of the Treasurers Account and is kept separate to meet any election charges by Uttlesford District Council.
 - Community Fund Account is funded by non-Council tax generated donations. It can only be used for designated community projects and not to subsidise the Precept.
 - Our bankers are Lloyds Bank.

2. **Precept:** This term describes the amount of money the Parish Council needs to carry out its business. There are just over 100 properties in the Parish with varying levels of occupation, tax band and the occupier's personal circumstances, all of which are used to calculate that property's Council Tax. The Precept is included in the Annual Council Tax Bill that we all pay to UDC and is remitted to the PC in two instalments to our Treasurers Account.

The Parish Council annual precept for 2018/19 was £2900, the same as for 2017/18. For 2019/20, due to extra expenses, it was increased by £100 to £3000, or approximately £1 per property for the year.

3. **Community Fund:** During our representations with the project management over the Planning Application for a Solar Farm in Hawkspur Green we secured an undertaking for an annual "Community Benefit" compensatory payment, for the whole Parish, related to the actual electrical power generated each year for 20 years. This money can only be used for specific community projects and cannot be used by the Parish Council to supplement its Precept funding or to offset any resident's local taxes.

Regrettably, a similar arrangement was not secured with the earlier Solar Farm, also within our Parish, which is situated south of the Bardfield Road near Markswood farmhouse between Little Bardfield and Oxen End. The only concession obtained then was for a line of new trees on the north side of the Bardfield Road from Furthermoor Hall to Blackbirds Corner.

This year the Community Fund made a grant to:

- Little Bardfield Cricket Club to replace essential equipment.
- The Almshouses towards the internal modernisation of the five properties.

The Parish Council are researching other projects within the Parish to consider grants from the Community Fund.

Planning Applications 2018/19 (all areas)

Uttlesford District Council are legally obliged to invite comments from the Parish Council on all Planning Applications submitted regarding any property within the Parish.

Whilst we diligently study all Planning Applications and submit timely constructive comments, UDC Planning Department frequently appear to take little notice of our input when final decisions are made. This can be a frustrating futile time-wasting exercise for the Parish Councillors.

Planning Applications reviewed during this period were:

17/2220 Land north west of Rosedale HG - two new properties.

The PC were in favour of this development for this infill vacant site with comments made regarding a drainage ditch and road safety on the blind bend. Unfortunately, the Planning Application contained many situational inaccuracies, irrelevancies, omissions and untruths which detracted from the actual building request. UDC refused the planning permission as being "unsustainable" at this location but an appeal was made to the Planning Inspectorate. The Inspector took note of comments submitted by the Parish Council. The Appeal was granted. The Inspector considered that UDC had acted

unreasonably and the applicant's costs in the appeal process were therefore unnecessarily incurred and an award of costs was made against UDC.

UTT/17/3748/LB Coft Hall, Oxen End. Single storey extension to join existing annexe to the main house.

UTT/18/0665/CLE Fanns Bungalow, Oxen End. Concerning agricultural occupancy restriction.

UTT/18/0648/HHF Hillside Cottage, Hawkspur Green. Garden room extension.

UTT/18/1040/HHF Rose Cottage, Little Bardfield. Variation of previous Planning Application

UTT/17/2036/HHF – redesign of car port.

UTT/18/1343/LB Chequers, Little Bardfield. Internal changes.

UTT/18/1684/HHF Coft Hall, Oxen End. Single storey rear extension. Listed Building Regulations

UTT/18/1685/HHF Coft Hall, Oxen End. Variation to previous Planning Application.

New House, Little Bardfield. East of Guivers, west of Three Chimneys. Postal naming as Southfield House, CM7 4TS.

UTT/18/0460/FUL Stansted Airport. Refers to taxiways and remote aircraft stands. Comments invited.

UTT/18/1981/CLE Pauls Farm, Little Bardfield. Retrospective conversion of two storey barn to a dwelling.

UTT/18/2307/FUL Pauls Farm, Little Bardfield. Retrospective change of use of existing farm building to light commercial use.

UTT/16/1284/DOC & ENF/18/0155/C Brook House, Hawkspur Green. UDC Environmental Health had requested Brook House to reposition security lighting to stop it dazzling drivers on the lane and its impact on nearby properties. The second reference was regarding non-compliance.

UTT/19/0001/FUL Fanns Bungalow, Oxen End. Installation of stables, tack room, hay store, outdoor ménage and exterior lighting. Objections and concerns were raised. The applicant submitted a modified Application which addressed the objections previously made.

UTT/19/0446/HHF Hill Hall, Hawkspur Green. Removal of one extension. Replaced by other extensions. None of this work can be seen from outside the property. No objections.

Uttlesford District Council tend not to challenge retrospective Planning Applications or non-compliance of certain conditions appended to an approved Planning Applications as a cost saving policy. Their subsequent review is frequently deemed to be "not expedient to enforce" anticipating that any appeal to the Planning Inspectorate following a refusal would cost UDC money as an Inspector might decide that if the PA had been properly made in the first instance then, on balance, it might have been approved. This UDC "policy" will lead to deliberate avoidance of submitting a Planning Application before work is carried out.

Essex County Council (ECC)

We are strongly supported by ECC Cllr Simon Walsh

1. Potholes and road defects: A few potholes have occurred, been reported and filled. An exception is the trench on Blackbirds Corner which has been outstanding since 2017. This was filled in April but with dirt and gravel, so the trench is re-forming.
2. Traffic Diversions HG: Further representation was necessary with Essex County Council Highways over the signing of the single-track lane between Little Bardfield and Little Sampford to take diverted two-way traffic from the Bardfield Road. We suggested an alternative route coming out of Thaxted at the triangle to turn left towards Little Sampford and Finchingfield, and the reverse, and so avoiding Little Bardfield and Hawkspur Green. ECC have so far not signed the lane through Hawkspur Green as a diversion route again. Obviously, some drivers who now know this route will continue to use it but hopefully HGV's will not.

3. Drain & Culvert Cleaning: ECC_Contractors cleared many drains in the Parish and jetted an under-road culvert in front of Small Farm.
4. Field drainage onto the lane near to Small Farm, HG: There is an ongoing problem with surface water draining from a ditch onto the lane causing a large puddle opposite the entrance to Small Farm. Apart from the traffic hazard and mud, the road surface is deteriorating. The PC are in discussion with ECC Highways to persuade the land owner to take remedial action. No further action has been taken and unfortunately our active ECC Highways liaison contact was made redundant as part of a cost saving “reorganisation”

For Essex Highways Information contact: www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/interactive-maps-and-live-travel-information/highways-information-map.aspx

East of England Ambulance Service

During the period September to November there were occasions when both paramedics and ambulances were called during the night to an address in Hawkspur Green. The navigation systems of four vehicles accurately took them to another property 700 meters beyond their intended destination. This delaying and worrying error was taken up with the Ambulance service. They found that when Ordnance Survey grid references for the properties were translated into Sat Nav co-ordinates and entered into their vehicle systems, there were location errors for some houses in Hawkspur Green. We have been assured that corrections have been made and all addresses in Hawkspur Green are now accurately plotted in their navigation systems.

Uttlesford District Council (UDC)

We have been strongly supported by UDC Cllr Simon Howell who is retiring as District Councillor in May 2019.

Hawkspur Green Lane - Little Sampford Road

We all know that the single track and unsigned lane running from Little Bardfield north through Hawkspur Green to Little Sampford is unsuitable for regular two-way traffic. This lane has again been an issue this year with Uttlesford District Council. The fundamental problem is that UDC, without consultation or notification, incorrectly registered a name for this narrow lane in the National Street Gazetteer in June 1997 as a **road** - Little Sampford Road, despite having previously named it themselves as Hawkspur Green Road and continue to refuse to correct either the place name or the term “road” to “lane”. There are standard definitions for street names which are governed by their width and this lane is far too narrow to be classified as a **road**.

Why does it matter to us?

Essex County Council Highways planners situated remotely in Chelmsford, when they see the lane name “Road”, they automatically consider it to be suitable for two-way traffic diversions despite it being only 2.6 metres wide in places – about the width of a car park space. Obviously, it should be correctly classified and named a “lane” and not a “road”.

Recently the UDC Chief Executive, Mrs Dawn French, proposed a series of lane & road name changes with the covert intention of hiding some of UDC’s previous errors. We pointed out that such suggested changes, which did not include our own accurate request, were inconsistent with UDC’s new Street Naming Policy. Such intentions would cause significant confusion as the highways being proposed for name change, such as part of Bell Lane to be renamed Little Sampford Road, had established names on maps and in Sat Nav systems – which UDC appeared to have overlooked!

We have had correspondence with Essex County Council Highways to enlighten them as to why the lane is not suitable as a diversionary route for two-way traffic. As we have made some progress with ECC, we have formally requested Uttlesford not to change any of the current street names and signage in Little Bardfield Parish.

To date, nothing further has happened with UDC and the lane should remain un-signed despite being formally incorrectly named as Little Sampford Road.

Interestingly, on the most recent Planning Application for Hawkspur Green, UDC addressed the lane on the same page as both Little Sampford Road and Hawkspur Green Road!

Historic names for this lane have been King's Highway in 1551 and Walden Lane in 1900.

Broadband (all areas)

Most houses have been advised by the contractor Gigaclear that high speed Broadband will be installed and available within the next few months. The Parish Council keep frequent contact with Gigaclear for progress reports. Gigaclear made a presentation at the Parish Council Meeting on March 11. Individual households can check they are on the roll out by looking on the Superfast Essex website <http://www.superfastessex.org/interactive-maps/rollout-map/> and entering their postcode.

Solar Farm (HG)

There is still confusion over its name. On the original Planning Application, it was wrongly called Hill Hall Solar Farm. As Hill Hall has no commercial connection to this development, the Parish Council have made continuous representations to the solar farm owners Lightsource Energy to change its name to Hawkspur Green Solar Farm. Lightsource have very recently reluctantly agreed to erect signage indicating Hawkspur Green Solar Farm. However, they have not changed the name on their original documents and drawings. Consequently, communications and contractors continue to refer to the site as Hill Hall Solar Farm which causes local confusion and inconvenience.

This solar farm is now well established and fortunately does not cause any local disruption. Some screening trees which had died have, at our request, been replaced. The Parish Council have also obtained an emergency contact if any of the occasional grazing sheep require attention.

Rural Crime (all areas) Crime Stoppers 0800 555 111

Suspicion of hare coursing infrequently taking place.

Fly Tipping Reporting (all areas)

Major incident to the Environment Agency 0800 80 70 60.

Minor incident to Uttlesford DC 01799 510 510

New Parish Website

A new website has been developed for the whole Parish and is not just about the Parish Council.

It will be officially launched in May: www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk

The main menu options are: Home, Overview, Parish Council, Parish Council Finance, History, News & Events Calendar, Organisations and Commercial.

Under History, the history of the Parish is reviewed from 1046.

The News & Events Calendar is dependent upon items for publication being notified to the website administrator: Terry Cutmore at lbpcwebsite.thc@btinternet.com

Under Organisations, the Parish Emergency Response Plan is listed.

Information sharing will continue via the three Notice Boards, the Bardfield Times and local area email groups.

Another busy year for a bunch of Volunteers!!

Report compiled by Cllr Terry Cutmore and authorised by Little Bardfield Parish Council, May 2019.