

# Little Bardfield Parish Council



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To: **All Residents of Little Bardfield Parish**

## **Subject: Parish Council Report 2019-2020**

This is the activity report from your Parish Council for the period April 2019 – March 2020. I hope that you will find it to be of interest and to share it with all members of your family.

Local area Email Contact Groups are currently used for the immediate circulation of News and Information, such as Highways closures, Government, County and District communications. This is in addition to the three Notice Boards.

If you are not already included in an Email Contact Group, then please email your request to your area Parish Councillor:

Little Bardfield:	Cllr. William Gardiner	<a href="mailto:moorhallfarms@btinternet.com">moorhallfarms@btinternet.com</a>
Hawkspur Green:	Cllr. Terry Cutmore	<a href="mailto:tcutmore@btinternet.com">tcutmore@btinternet.com</a>
Oxen End:	Cllr. Colin Simpson	<a href="mailto:colinormondsimpson@gmail.com">colinormondsimpson@gmail.com</a>
The Hydes:	Cllr. Andrew Davies	<a href="mailto:davies@farmline.com">davies@farmline.com</a>

For more general information please visit your Parish Website.

[www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk](http://www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk)

This covers many subject areas including:

- News & Events Calendar
- Notices and Information
- Minutes of Parish Council Meetings
- Highways, County and District Councillor's Reports
- The early history of your Parish.

With kind regards

Councillor William Gardiner  
Chairman  
Little Bardfield Parish Council  
31 March 2020

## **Little Bardfield Parish Council – 2019-2020 Report**

This report summarises the activities of the Parish Council for the 12 months from April 2019 to March 2020.

### **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 needs representation.

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

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

### **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: Ms Liz Williamson. Uttlesford District Council, (UDC) Cllr Alan Storah. Essex County Council, (ECC) Cllr Simon Walsh. Essex Association of Local Councils: [www.ealc.gov.uk](http://www.ealc.gov.uk)

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

### **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. The Venue is usually in the Church or the Cricket Club Pavilion.

The Agendas and Minutes of all meetings are published on the three Notice Boards and on the Parish website: [www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk](http://www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk)

### **This year's Meetings were held:**

2019	May 13	Annual Parish Meeting in St Katherines Church
	July 24	Planning Application Meeting in The Hydes Conference Room
	September 9	Little Bardfield Cricket Pavilion
	November 11	Little Bardfield Cricket Pavilion
2020	March 17	Cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

### **Items addressed during this period:**

#### **Finance (PC)**

1. Our finances operate in two separate accounts with Lloyds Bank.
  - 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,
  - Community Account is funded by non-Council tax generated donations. It can only be used for designated community projects and not to subsidise the Precept.

## 2. Treasurers Account:

- ECC delegate to the PC the responsibility of verge cutting throughout the Parish. For various reasons, for a few years ECC failed to make grants towards these costs. This situation has been resolved and all back payments received in full.
- Forward modelling for budgetary purposes indicated that past Precept increases have been inadequate to keep up with inflation. Consequently, at 2019-20 year end the Parish Council was overspent against budget resulting in a loss of reserves.
- The Budget for 2020-21 will indicate expenditure exceeding income due to the lower than required Precept receipts from previous years. This shortfall will be partially met from the backdated verge grant from ECC.

3. Precept: This term describes the amount of money the Parish Council needs to carry out its business. There are 105 properties in the Parish with varying levels of occupation, tax band and the occupier's personal circumstances. These factors are used to calculate each individual property's Council Tax. The Parish Precept is a total of all the individual properties and is included in the Annual Council Tax Bill that we all pay to UDC. It is remitted to the PC in two instalments to our Treasurers Account. The Parish Precept for 2020/21 increased by £250 to £3250. This shows as an 8.3% increase which averages at £2.38 per property per year – less than the price of one cup of coffee per year. The average Parish Precept is £38.08p.a. or 0.73p per week! There are 57 Parishes within Uttlesford District. In descending order from the highest Parish Precept, Little Bardfield ranks at number 48.

4. Community Fund: This is funded by an annual compensatory payment to the Parish by the operators of the Hawkspur Green Solar Farm and is made available for distribution throughout the whole Parish.

This year Community Fund grants were made to:

- Village website
- Village barbecue
- Little Bardfield Cricket Club
- Refurbishing the Village Sign
- University course books
- Purchase of a Defibrillator
- Cutting hedges not covered by the ECC Verge Cutting Grant
- Stop Stansted Expansion
- Essex Air Ambulance
- Thaxted Charity Minibus

## **Planning Applications 2019-2020 (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, prefixed UTT, reviewed during this period were:

- 19/992/HHF Squirrels (LB) Replacement garage and studio
- 19/1151/HHF Southfield House (LB) Conservatory
- 19/1294/FUL Furthermoor House (LB) Erection of one dwelling
- 19/1598/FUL Phoenix House (LB) Agricultural land changed to garden

- 19/1654/FUL Pauls Farm (LB) Erection of light industrial buildings
- 19/1674/CLE Pauls Farm (LB) Retrospective, five caravans as residential dwellings
- 19/1877/HHF Grove Bungalow (OE) extension
- 19/2114/HHF Frenches Farm (OE) Retrospective, Pergola and fire pit
- 19/2143/HHF Squirrels. (LB) Revised PA. Replacement garage
- 19/2304/FUL Land south of Hillside Cottage (HG) one dwelling house
- 19/2521/HHF 8 Styles (LB) extension
- 19/3002/HHF Pauls Farm (LB) Alterations to a residential barn.
- 19/3006/HHF Rusper (LB) Retrospective, extension
- 19/3059/FUL The Bungalow (LB) Replacement dwelling
- 19/3098/FUL Frenches Farm (OE) Retrospective, paddock and ménage
- 20/0077/LB Markswood (LB) Extensions

Exterior floodlighting on Brook House – this can blind passing drivers. Despite numerous representations to UDC, they decided it was “not expedient” to act.

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. This “policy” can lead to deliberate avoidance of submitting a Planning Application before work is carried out.

### **Unauthorised Fly Tipping**

A major situation occurred in Little Bardfield. A landowner established, in conjunction with a commercial waste company, an unauthorised rubbish tip on land adjacent to the River Pant. To facilitate this a hardcore roadway was laid down over a designated footpath. Allegations have been made that hazardous materials and builders rubbish from outside of the Parish have been buried there. The tip is of considerable size, is located immediately next to the river and was recently partially subjected to river flooding. This created a risk of chemical leaching, pollution and possible poisoning of the river. Further downstream water is taken from the river by Anglian Water at Petchey’s Bridge for inclusion in the domestic water supply. For over five months strong representations were made by the Parish Council to the Environment Agency, Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council. Parish Councillors have met with UDC Enforcement Officers to encourage them to take positive action on this environmental and health danger. A situation of “pass the buck” has resulted with no positive action to either stop the unauthorised tipping or to have it removed by any of the official Agencies.

Cllr Simon Walsh has also made further representations to ECC Enforcement Officers.

### **Reporting:**

Major incident to the Environment Agency 0800 80 70 60.

Minor incident to Uttlesford DC 01799 510 510

### **Essex County Council (ECC)**

We are strongly supported by ECC Cllr Simon Walsh.

His periodic reports are published on our website.

- **Essex Highways - Potholes and road defects:** Periodic Highways Reports are published on the website. A few potholes have occurred, been reported and filled. The trench on Blackbirds Corner, which was filled by ECC contractors in April 2019 with dirt and gravel, has re-opened. Orange paint was put around it in January and March, but no further action has occurred. A recurring pothole in Hawkspur Green, near to Coopers Transport has been treated the same.
- **Traffic Diversions HG:** Essex County Council Highways have ceased signing the single-track lane between Little Bardfield and Little Sampford as a diversion for two-way traffic from the Bardfield Road.

- Field drainage onto the lane near to Small Farm, HG: The surface water draining from a ditch onto the lane causes a large puddle to form opposite the entrance to Small Farm. Despite representations to ECC Highways, they have not taken any action to resolve this.
- Hawkspur Green Bridleway: ECC cleared overgrowing obstructions through the bridleway.

### **Uttlesford District Council (UDC)**

We are strongly supported by UDC Cllr Alan Storah. His periodic reports are published on our website. He obtained a grant of £500 from UDC towards the cost of providing a Defibrillator. This will be installed in Little Bardfield village at the entrance to the cricket field.

### **Broadband (all areas)**

GigaClear representatives attended two Parish Council Meetings to explain their lack of progress. The installation contractor was changed midway through the project. The “backbone” cabling to provide a “pot” at each residence was completed in March – although some were missed out. Final connection into individual properties will be completed once a resident makes a contract with a service provider. Hawkspur Green suffered intolerable traffic situations when the GigaClear’s contractors wrongly signed the lane, less than 3m wide in places, as the diversion route for two-way traffic when they closed the Bardfield Road between Great Bardfield and Thaxted. This has largely destroyed what was classified as a protected lane with protected verges. Norfolk County installed rural high speed broadband on overhead telephone poles quickly and cheaply. One might ask why couldn’t Essex County do the same?

### **Solar Farm (HG)**

This solar farm is now well established and fortunately does not cause any local disruption. Some screening trees which have died, at our request, are being replaced.

The Parish Council have 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.

### **Parish Website**

This was launched in May 2019. [www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk](http://www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk) and is for the whole Parish.

The website main menu options are:

Home, Overview, Parish Council, Parish Council Finance, History.

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

News & Events Calendar, Organisations and Commercial.

- Under Organisations, the Parish Emergency Response Plan is listed.
- The News & Events Calendar is dependent upon items for publication being notified to the website administrator: Terry Cutmore at [lbpcwebsite.thc@btinternet.com](mailto:lbpcwebsite.thc@btinternet.com)

A Parish website is routinely visited by potential residents to find out more about a possible location.

Information sharing continues via attendance at Parish Council Meetings, local area Email Contact Groups, the Website, the three Notice Boards and the Bardfield Times.

Another busy year for a bunch of Volunteers!!

Report compiled by Cllr Terry Cutmore and authorised by Little Bardfield Parish Council, March 2020.