

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF HADSTOCK PARISH

6 May 2022

Chairman's report for the period May 2021 – April 2022.

The following is a summary of Parish Council activity over this period.

Recreation Ground:

The Recreation Ground is the Council's principal asset and has been owned since 1908. The Parish Council has continued to invest in the play equipment with the installation of a new see-saw and also a new hardwood seat nearby. The Heritage Orchard now has 14 trees, a mix of apple, pear and gage, and all are doing well. We have changed the grass cutting policy to leave two boundaries uncut during the growing season to encourage the establishment of wildflowers.

The annual playground inspection again gave a favourable report with only minor remedial work required.

Len's Path

With the permission of Sue Crawley a bench seat has been installed at the Village end of Len's Path and the Rowlandson family have attached a brass plaque in memory of Len Rowlandson after whom the path is named. Last winter the Linton end of the path was virtually impassable due to poor drainage. We have had a contractor dig this out and fill with hardcore and surface with road scalplings.

Len's Path is leased by the Parish Council from the landowner until 2033.

Planning Applications

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all planning applications in the Parish. There have been 9, 7 for extensions or conversions (the Parish Council objected to one of these) and 2 under new legislation for permitted development.

New legislation came into force in August 2021 which allows certain commercial and business premises to be converted to residential without the need for planning permission. If the Planning Authority agrees that certain conditions are met then the development can legally go ahead. The grounds for refusal are very limited unlike a planning application where the decision can be more subjective. There were two notices under this legislation; The Mill, Yews Farm and the Old Operations Block, Bowsers Lane (formerly Villiers Brothers). The Parish Council objected to both. The Mill has been approved and the Old Operations block rejected (twice).

Uttlesford District Council are still working on the Local Plan. The Parish Council submitted a fact check on the two sites in Hadstock submitted in the Call for Sites last year but nothing has been heard since. It is still the out of date 2005 plan which is in force.

Highways and Traffic

Road closures have been a concerning issue through the year. These have been caused by a combination of utility work (both planned and emergency) and new housing development in Walden. Whilst we appreciate repairs being done and understand the need for new housing it often seems that the utility or contractor takes the easy option of closing the road. Pressure from Little Walden residents did result in some improvements to the arrangements on Little Walden Road during closure in March. There is no coordination of these closures at a County level and we are in discussion with our County Councillor on this.

The verge damage on Bartlow Road caused during the diversion during a road closure at The Grip and the continuing problem of flooding by the Recreation Ground gate have been put to the County Council for funding.

The Speedwatch band of volunteers continue their work and offenders are contacted by the police.

Public Rights of Way.

Rights of Way are the responsibility of the County Council but the Parish Council monitors their condition and liaises with the Rights of Way Officer. We have walked most of the paths during the year. Please report any closure of paths and required maintenance to the Parish Clerk. Minor work is often undertaken by volunteers but other work or when the landowner has to be contacted are reported to the County

The County has replaced a number of 'sleeper bridges' with a more robust construction incorporating handrails.

Village Website

The website really needs a 'webmaster' to keep content up to date and looking fresh.

Telephone Box and Defibrillator

There is a book and DVD exchange in the old telephone box as well as the defibrillator which has a support contract with Community Heartbeat Trust. A CPR training session could be arranged if there is sufficient demand.

The telephone box was purchased for £1 by the Parish Council from BT many years ago. The electricity is unmetered and provided at no cost by BT. It is a Grade II Listed Building.

Green Skip

The bi-weekly service is operated by Uttlesford District Council but paid for by the Parish Council. This is continuing for 2022/23.

District and County Councils

The Parish Council liaises with our District and County Councillors on any matter which is their responsibility.

Governance

In recent years the burden on small parish councils to meet the requirements for good governance and transparency has greatly increased. The Parish Clerk is working hard on putting into place policies, documentation and website content.

Finance

The year end accounts will be available on the website during June but here is an unofficial, unaudited summary with approximate figures:

We received income of £13000, including £1500 in grants.

We spent:

Recreation Ground	£5600
Len's Path	£900
General Admin	£1400
Clerk salary, training, expenses	£6000
Grass cutting	£1500
Green skip	£1400

This leaves reserves at the end of the year of about £7500.

The Parish Council tax for 2022/23 has increased by £2.42 pa for a Band D property or 3.9%, the first increase in three years.

The Parish Clerk has been successful with grant applications over the last few years which have paid for much of the improvements on the Recreation Ground and Len's Path. We have also benefitted from an annual £500 from the District Councillor's Ward Fund.

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

A Village Picnic on the Recreation Ground and an evening Barn Dance in the Village Hall, both on Friday 3rd June, have been organised by a group of villagers with the help of the Parish Council. The Parish Council is providing 90 saplings as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative for residents to plant in their own gardens.

Other Matters

Parking on Bilberry End has been a problem, caused mainly by contractors' vans but now seems to have improved.

A new salt bin has been purchased and is waiting for installation on Bilberry End.

Welcome Bags are given to all new residents. (The 'Love Hadstock' bags are still available for purchase.)

Councillors

The councillors are Rick Albrow (chair), Keith Nuttall (vice-chair), Trevor Smith, Sara Porter and Jude Hannam. There is currently one casual vacancy. The next elections will be held in May 2023.

My thanks, on behalf of the Village, to all councillors for their work, much of it 'behind the scenes' and in particular to our very able and hard working Parish Clerk, Sara Beckett.

Rick Albrow

Chair Hadstock Parish Council

April 2022