

St Stephen Parish Council

Spring Newsletter Issue 28 - 2015

Carol Concert 2014

Our 15th Annual Carol Concert on 7 December was a resounding success, and comments from residents such as, "We know Christmas has arrived when we attend this Carol Concert" brings it all into perspective. The star of the show this year was a real lamb, by the name of Larry, who took centre stage during the nativity scene performed by the children of How Wood School. Our thanks go to these children and those from Park Street School and Mount Pleasant School for their participation. Well done. Traditional carol music was provided by Watford Brass Band assisted by a mixed choir from the local churches with their choir master, Ian LaRiviere. The invited guests were St. Albans MP, Anne Main and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Janet Churchard.

We thank Penny Farmer for supplying the lamb, and we are grateful to the cadets from 220 Squadron Air Training Corps, to Salsa Mish and to the members of Parish Staff and volunteers. Without this help it would not be possible to host such an event. A collection was made on behalf of this year's charity, Dementia UK, raising £446, so a big 'Thank You' to all who contributed. We all look forward to the next one.

New Parish website – time for your comments

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

As this issue goes to press, we are just about to launch Phase 1 of the new Parish website. We hope that you are already finding the improved site useful. Please do drop us a note with your feedback, and let us know what additional features you would appreciate. Phase 2 coming soon.

Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you to all the residents who responded to our letter saying that they would like to be involved in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. The initial stage is underway with an application to designate the parish boundary. The 8 week consultation commenced on 2 March and will be decided by the District Council on 23 April.

An email we were delighted to receive from a happy parishioner!

(name and address supplied)

"Dear members of the parish council, I just wanted to offer you some feedback on the newly refurbished sports hall and its new sports lighting system. My badminton group returned to play there today and we were all very impressed with the work that has been carried out. The lighting system is nothing less than superb and we realise that this would have been a costly exercise. But it far supercedes that of Woodside in Garston and Westminster Lodge. And the floor and sharp markings are excellent. We could not be happier with what has been done and as ever, the centre is run to the highest of standards. The Manager Gill and caretaker [sic] Clive are both very professional and run the centre with the utmost consideration for those hiring its facilities. They always go the extra mile in terms of customer care.

We are so very lucky to have such wonderful facilities in our Community. So it's a BIG THANK YOU from all of us and well done to all those serving us on the Parish Council."



Message from the Chairman

At this time of year the Parish Council has to set the precept for the following year. Last year we decided we would not make any increase, however, as explained in the Spring Newsletter 2014, it did not follow that this could be the outcome each year. Unlike County and District Councils, we do not receive a Government incentive enabling us to keep the precept at its current level. Neither do we receive a share of the business rates, which the District Council does. In order to continue to provide excellent services, we have decided to increase the precept by 2.5 pence per week or £1.24 per annum for band 'D' households, which equates to a 2% increase.

Apart from the buildings we must maintain, we maintain six play areas. Some play equipment has to be replaced, through wear and tear. There is also a call to provide additional items, all at Parish expense.

We have again gained a Green Flag award for Greenwood Park, and the judges when making the award commented:

"The Council, staff and the community should feel a real sense of pride and achievement for what is accomplished at this park. It provides real value for money."

We hope also to gain this award for Park Street Recreation Ground. Work has just been completed at Greenwood Park Community Centre, where new lighting has been installed, the sports hall floor has been re-sanded and re-marked and the external woodwork has had wood-effect PVC cladding affixed, which will require minimum maintenance in the future. All this work has been funded without the aid of any grants.

We continue to look at how we can make savings and how to encourage our residents to use our excellent facilities which are available for sport and leisure.

Full details can be found on our new website www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Cl Mick Freeman, Chairman



Remembrance Service

Last November, we saw a large gathering at the Parish War Memorial in Park Street. More of the youth organisations attended, and together with many others they laid wreaths, posies or crosses - a fitting tribute to the fallen, which was touching to see. It was gratifying to see so many of all ages in attendance. The numbers have grown to such an extent that we are in talks with the Police and other authorities, with a view to having the main road closed for the duration of the service this year. This service was particularly poignant as 2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the commencement of WW1, which lasted for four years, and a wreath was laid in honour of the Unknown Soldier.

Blackgreen Wood Volunteers

The first project day of this newly formed volunteer group took place in Blackgreen Wood, on an unusually bright sunny day in December. It was unfortunate that being so near Christmas a number of possible new volunteers were unable to make it on this occasion, however the group was ably supported by members of the Friends of Hanstead Wood team who brought their expertise to the tasks at hand.

During the morning's work we were able to install 2 rustic benches, made from timber produced in this wood during the Open Day last year, and cleared more of the invasive holly along the footpaths. Everyone said they enjoyed the chance to help in the management of this local woodland which gave them a feeling of well-being and also in the knowledge that they had made a useful contribution to our community. As the wood is now easily accessible from Park Street Lane and Lye Lane we would very much like to welcome anyone from Bricket Wood and Park Street who would like to join us on the volunteer days. For more information please contact the Parish Office, or Cllr John Bell on 01727 831280.



Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

When you receive this Newsletter the result of the High Court hearing – scheduled for 4 and 5 February – will be known. The hearing is a challenge by St Albans District Council against the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Eric Pickles, on the legality of his decision to grant permission for the SRFI on Green Belt land at Park Street. The challenge is based on three points of law. We have supported throughout, the actions of the District Council and STRiFE in opposing and challenging the decisions of the planning inspectors and the Secretary of State. The outcome of the High Court decision will not necessarily be the end of the matter, for it will then rest on whether Hertfordshire County Council will sell the land – it owns the greater part of it – to the developers.

Memorial bench

The grounds team have had a request to make a memorial bench for Greenwood Park. This is not unusual as they have done it before, and this time they offered to make the bench out of



wood felled in Blackgreen Wood, and the family made a donation towards costs. The team had some oak timber ready for use, having been stored for about 5 years. They picked out suitable wood, sanded it, removed sharp edges and constructed the metal ends (painted greenwood green) for it. At this point the grounds team showed the bench to the clients, who supplied three plaques to fix to the bench. At their request a tube was fitted to the back of the bench so that flowers could be put in it. The bench was installed on a Friday afternoon for the family to unveil it on Saturday morning, in happy memory of Arthur John Lloyd, a regular user of the park. Mrs Lloyd has written to express her family's gratitude to the grounds team for their efforts in creating this bench.

We are currently making a further seat for Woodbury Field sponsored by the BWRA, and we have installed some more seats made from our own oak in Parish play areas.

A big 'Thank You' to the grounds team for their environmentally conscious handiwork!

Woodland Management

Residents may be concerned at the extent of tree felling and coppicing that is in the process of being carried out. This may appear quite drastic but it is for the benefit of the woodland to ensure its long-term health. Both woodlands had been neglected for many years and in particular, trees like the hornbeam and hazel should not have been allowed to grow so big. These trees, which in the past would have been cut back (coppiced) to make useful items, are now of such a size that without intervention they might start to fall over under their own weight. To prevent this, certain areas of the woods have been selected for coppicing and this will help the trees to produce new growth and sustain them for the future. It is also planned to clear areas of invasive holly, particularly in Blackgreen Wood, where this is an urgent problem. Both these enterprises will allow more light into the woods, which will stimulate regrowth of young trees in the cut areas. All the work is being carried out under guidance from the Forestry Commission, who have agreed the management plans for both woodlands.



Greenwood Park Community Centre

Situated in extensive parkland, we have a splendid sports hall which has just had the floor re-varnished and re-marked (to the delight of existing users) and which now boasts the latest in lighting, which can adjust to suit different sports and provide suitable lighting for functions. There is a newly re-decorated room for smaller functions, and a lounge/meeting room, both served by a bar. All rooms have use of a kitchen. The sports hall is suitable for most indoor sports with badminton and volleyball courts, indoor football pitch etc. Beside the centre is a tennis club with public and Kid's Zone courts for hire (contact R.A & C.A Newsagents on 01727 851954, NOT the Community Centre). Some groups meeting here are private, but many are open to new members. Enquiries are welcome – contact Gill Rix on 01727 874867 or bookings@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk. To contact groups directly refer to our activities leaflet available on our website or from the Community Centre and Parish Office.

Planning matters

Two major planning applications recently have caused concern to residents. An application has been submitted to SADC to build a Sainsbury's local convenience store on the green space next to the Three Hammers public house in Chiswell Green. We held a consultation evening at Greenwood Park community centre on 7 January for residents and to accept questionnaires with their views. This consultation was attended by approx. 100 residents and over 70 questionnaires were completed, none being in favour. This view is echoed by the Parish Council. These views have been submitted to SADC.

A second outline planning application was received for the development of the Hanstead Park HSBC site in Smug Oak Lane, Bricket Wood. Two factors differed in this application from the previous one, in that the proposed entrance/exit in Drop Lane has been abandoned, and that the number of units to be built has been reduced from 175 to 138. Again we held a consultation evening on 13 January at the Parish Centre and questionnaires completed by residents have been forwarded to SADC. We have not opposed this application in principle and this is echoed by the Bricket Wood Residents' Association. In both cases we and the BWRA have asked that certain conditions are placed on the development.

We await the outcome of both these applications.

Defibrillator

As you may have read in the local papers a defibrillator has been installed on the wall of the Community Centre at Greenwood Park. This piece of equipment can be a life saver. You might ask "In the event of an emergency will I know how to use it?" Yes, you will - the instructions are clear and simple. "Can I cause more harm?" No, you can't. It is programmed not to operate if it detects a heartbeat. If you are in the Park, do go and have a look -familiarise yourself with it and what you should do, just in case. It was purchased with donations from the users of the Park and the Community Centre, and by the Parish Council. A plaque acknowledging those donors is displayed next to the device. Thank you to all who helped raise the money



Allotments - why not have a go?

The Council currently has vacant allotments on the Tippendell Lane and Watford Road sites, both located within Greenwood Park in Chiswell Green. Taking on an allotment is a great way of meeting new friends, partaking of fresh air, sunshine (let's not mention the rain) and gentle to



strenuous exercise without the need to slip on Lycra and trainers! Your own produce will taste better, will be fresher than that purchased from a supermarket and can save you money. Why not have a go? The Council has a variety of small and larger plots, varying in price from £12 to £20 per year. Contact Carol Hardy 01923 681443 or email carol@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Assets of Community Value

As part of the Localism Act 2011 the Government indicated that local residents enjoying the use of land or facilities within their community, may now bid for that asset if it comes up for sale. Under this scheme, (Assets of Community Value) groups, including the Parish Council, could ask for an identified asset to be placed on the District Council's ACV register. If successful, it would mean that, if the item came up for sale, the group would have 6 weeks to make a bid to purchase, and a further 6 months to raise the purchase price. If the group later decide not to go ahead with a bid, the owner of the asset could proceed with the sale without restriction.

We applied for several amenities to be placed on the register including Hanstead Wood and the adjacent field, How Wood, Park Wood and Scrubbs Wood and the Old Fox pub in School Lane. So far only Park Wood and Scrubbs Wood have been challenged by the owners, and the appeal against being registered will be subject to a hearing at the District Council Offices.

Save our Post Office

As we go to press, many of you will be aware of the Co-op's intention to remove the Post Office from their store in How Wood on 6 April. The nearest Post Office in Chiswell Green is over half a mile away, and not practical for many residents. We are anxious to retain the How Wood Post Office. Cllr Baillie set up an online petition for residents to express their feelings at the loss of this facility. If you are unable to complete it online, please call her on 01923 404770. To add your comments, go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BPBS9C5>.



Parish in Bloom

We did well last year in the second year of this event, with many more entries, and beautiful results. This year we have identified many grass verges where we would like to create flower beds and we are seeking permission from Herts Highways. Hopefully this will be approved and we will be able to make a start.

Watch this space...

There will be a **Volunteer Planting Day on Tuesday 24 March 10.30am**. Let us know if you can help. Last year, Lafarge Tarmac generously donated 5 large boulders to enhance the entrance to Greenwood Park. We want to make that area even brighter and welcome your ideas on how to do it, and hope you will help with planting, watering, etc.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on Thursday 30 April at St. Stephen Parish Centre at 7pm. Light refreshments will be served. Everybody is invited to attend and meet your Parish Councillors. We can tell you what the Parish Council has achieved in the past year and what our aims are. Apart from reports from committees, there will be a presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish in Bloom and the Annual Events Working Party. Community Awards will be presented and books will be given to local primary schools.

Community Events Diary

- 17 Mar:** **Where the Wild Things Are** PS & Frogmore Society, PS Village Hall, 8.15 pm, £1, 01727 873612
- 03 Apr:** **Easter Celebration** 10.30am outside How Wood shops, Free hot cross buns & tea at PS Baptist Church, 01727 370882
- 11 Apr:** **Blackgreen Wood Volunteer Day** Meet at double gate Lye Lane, 10am
- 14 Apr:** **PS Neighbourhood Watch Public Meeting** PS Baptist Church Hall 7.45pm 01727 873365
- 22 Apr:** **Local Birds & Wildlife** Ver Valley Society, Parish Centre, 7.30-10pm, www.riverver.co.uk
- 16 May:** **Charity Jumble Sale** St Bart's Church Hall, 10 -11am, 50p, 01727 873672
- 07 Jun:** **Summer Craft Fair and Boot Sale** PSRA, Park Street Recreation Ground, 01727 872507
- 18 Jun:** **The Dogs Trust** CG Townswomen's Guild, CG URC Hall, 7.15 pm, 01727 850373

Main Council Meetings:

19 March, 16 April, 21 May, 18 June

2015 Parish Council events:

- 24 Mar:** Volunteer Planting Day Greenwood Park, outside Community Centre, 10.30am
- 30 Apr:** Annual Parish Meeting
- 01 May:** Entries open Parish in Bloom 2015
- 07 May:** Parish Council Elections
- 15-17 May:** Funfair at Greenwood Park
- 05-07 Jun:** Funfair at PS Recreation Ground
- 27 Jun:** Armed Forces Day
- 27-29 Jul:** Love Parks Event
- 10 Sep:** Parish in Bloom Awards Evening
- 06 Dec:** Annual Carol Concert

For a full list of local activities please see our website.

St Stephen Parish Councillors



Cllr John Bell
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 831280



Cllr Jay Baillie
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 404770



Cllr David Brannen
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 662423



Cllr Wendy Berriman
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 673355



Cllr Ian Getley
Park Street Councillor
01727 872507



Cllr Michael Freeman
Park Street Councillor
01727 873543



Cllr Oonah Jones
Chiswell Green Councillor
01727 865333



Cllr Karen Hurford
Chiswell Green Councillor
07710 860337



Cllr Bill Pryce
Park Street Councillor
01727 873181



Cllr Dorothy Kerry
Bricket Wood Councillor
01923 663352



Cllr Eileen Whittaker
Park Street Councillor
01727 873710



Cllr Nicholas Tyndale
Park Street Councillor
01727 872647

A pie chart showing how we plan to use our precept can be found on our website:

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

A hard copy is available from the Parish Council Office.

St Stephen Parish Council

Parish Council Meetings

Main Council and Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber at the St Stephen Parish Centre in Station Road, Bricket Wood. Times and dates are displayed on the parish noticeboards. Residents are welcome to attend the meetings.



The Parish Office

First floor, The St Stephen Parish Centre,
Station Road, Bricket Wood,
St Albans, AL2 3PJ

Tel: 01923 681443 Fax: 01923 681338

Email: clerk@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Open Daily from 9.00am to 5.00pm or by prior appointment.
Contact either: Juliet Pienaar, Clerk or Carol Hardy, Assistant Clerk.

