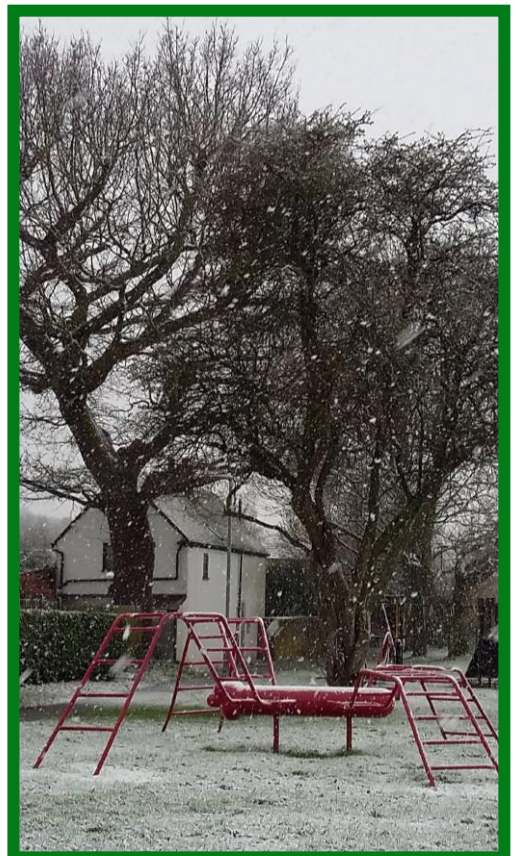
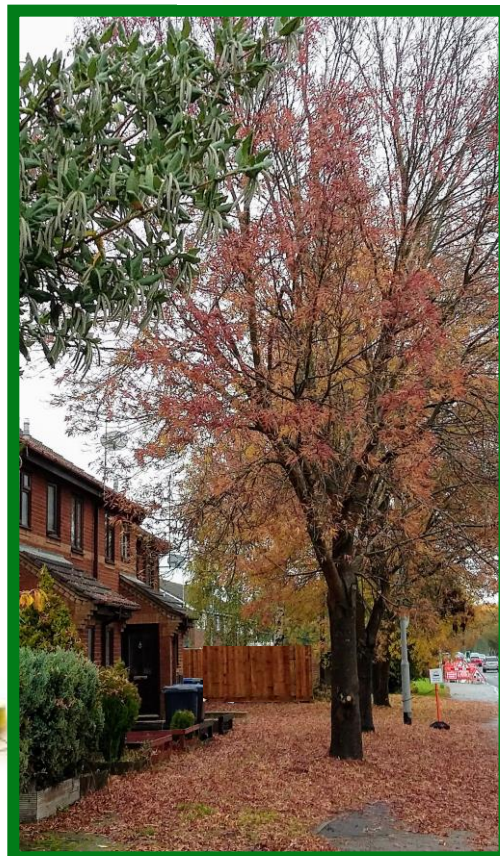




Woolmer Green Parish Council Annual Report 2019 - 2020



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. The Councillors four year term of office came to an end in May 2019 and Councillors Jenny Hawkins and Tony White decided to stand down. The Parish Council thanks them for all their hard work over their time in office. Andy Gribble, Phil Corke, Sarah Hall and Grant Pinney stood for election again along with new Councillor Tim Dix and were all elected unopposed. The sixth vacancy was filled by Rob Horton who was co-opted onto the Council after the election. Both Tim and Rob attended new councillor training arranged by our county association and Rob also took further training in legal matters and planning.

Parish Councillors

Andy Gribble, Chairman

Transport, Staffing Committee, Young Person Liaison.

Phil Corke, Vice Chairman

Planning, Community, Staffing Committee.

Tim Dix

Hall Grounds, Tree Warden.

Sarah Hall

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

Rob Horton

Planning, Environment.

Grant Pinney

Village Hall, Community.

Clerk to the Council

Janet Pearce

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

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 but these have been suspended until further notice due to the current pandemic.

County Councillor

Councillor Richard Smith.

Member of Parliament

Grant Shapps MP

Hall & Grounds

Last year the ladies wash room was refurbished and so this year refurbishment continued in both the gents and the disabled washrooms. The rooms were retiled and new basins were installed in the gents that were set in to a stone vanity unit supplied by Cawdor Stone Gallery. A new toilet was installed in the disabled room and new mirrors and soap dispensers completed the makeover. All the work was undertaken by local plumber, John Grimwood of Frontline Plumbing.

Over the summer, when the hall was a little quieter, a new electrical distribution board was installed that now meets all the latest safety regulations. The cost for this was £2,735.

One of the hall manifolds that circulate the underfloor heating had corroded and needed replacing and this was an opportunity to flush out the pipework at the same time to ensure the heating remained efficient. The cost of this work was £3,417.

The Parish Council purchased three table trollies for the hall so the tables can be stored safely and they also enable the caretakers and any users of the hall to move the equipment around quickly and easily. These cost £892.

Following advice from the Parish Council insurers a latch post was designed and fitted to the height barrier by a local company. This ensures that the barrier can be safely fixed in an open position when required and cost £400.

It was observed that the path from the hall car park to the entrance gate in Hall Lane was rather dark and so to improve safety the Council has been monitoring the efficiency of solar lighting. This is a much cheaper option than installing electrical cabling from the village hall so hopefully the solar lights will prove to be an inexpensive and satisfactory solution.

Environment

The two village playgrounds are inspected weekly by village volunteer Chris and annually by an external company. During the inspections it came to light that the wood on the balance beam in the Garden Road playground was rotting. A Woolmer Green joinery company, Castle Joinery, took on the job of constructing new wooden sections and fitting them onto the equipment. This was cheaper than importing purpose made parts from Europe and cost £905.

Previous Councillor Tony White who was experienced at applying to the Parish Paths Partnership (PPP) over the last eight years for a grant, agreed to become a volunteer and apply again in 2019 on behalf of the Parish Council. It was decided that posts to Rights of Way 10 & 24 needed replacing along with a rotten post on the handrail of the steps in New Road. The grant application was successful and the work has been completed. Thank you, Tony for your help this year. The County Council are now discontinuing the PPP grant funding scheme. In future the Rights of Way Officer will identify and organise any required work themselves although the Parish Council will be kept informed and is able to highlight issues to them.

The Twin Foxes gate was locked for twenty four hours from 12.00pm on Saturday 1st February until 12.00pm on Sunday 2nd in order to prevent a permanent Right of Way from becoming established. This closure will occur annually on the first weekend in February.

Although Jenny Hawkins stepped down as councillor she has continued to plant up and tend our village planters as a volunteer. As ever they looked stunning over the summer and provide some spring colour during the duller months. Thank you Jenny.

This year Woolmer Green Parish Council signed up to become a branch member of the Tree Charter. This initiative was begun in 2015 by the Woodland Trust with the aim of involving communities in monitoring local trees and encouraging wildlife habitats. Councillor Tm Dix has become the Tree Warden for Woolmer Green and the Council is committed to encompassing the principles of the Tree Charter during 2020 and beyond.

To commemorate Tree Charter Day on 30th November a montage of some of Woolmer Green's trees was circulated on the Parish Council's social media pages.

Planning

The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan was submitted for examination in May 2017 and proposed building 12,000 new dwellings over a fifteen year period, but the government planning inspector was not satisfied the Local Plan was sound as it did not meet the assessed need for housing of 16,000 dwellings. To address this, the Borough Council undertook a "call for sites" at the beginning of 2019 to encourage land owners to submit new sites that could be included in the Local Plan.

These new sites were subject to a consultation and in May 2019 the Parish Council held a public meeting so that residents could have their say on the site which would inform the Parish Council's response. Councillors from Woolmer Green and Welwyn also met to discuss the outcome of the "call for sites" process.

The submitted sites have been assessed by the Borough and currently another consultation is taking place asking for comments on the new sites that have been added to the Local Plan. With regard to Woolmer Green; one additional site has been added for housing and this is the Marshalls car dealership site for 34 dwellings which will also include some retail/business use. This site has been re-evaluated as it had previously been earmarked for employment. The Green Belt site already identified behind Lessiter's & Marshalls for 150 dwellings is to remain in the Plan and the Parish Council will argue against its inclusion at the relevant Hearing session to be held by the examination inspector.

Currently the Entech site is included in the Local Plan as employment land but this has already been granted planning permission and 72 dwellings are currently under construction there. This site will be regarded as a "windfall" development in that it was not specifically identified as available for housing in the Local Plan process.

With the new site allocation of 34 dwellings and the Green Belt development remaining in the Local Plan; Woolmer Green's allocation of housing will be 184 dwellings over the next fifteen years plus a further 72 from the windfall development. The Parish Council will argue that this is over development.

Councillors Gribble & Horton attended a meeting with Taylor Wimpey to discuss progress at the Entech development and also the future replanting of trees and hedges on the site. The Council has also asked the owners of the shops and office complex that is being constructed by Ashe Construction independently, to keep the Parish Council informed as to who the

occupiers of the shops will be. This complex should be completed at the end of 2020 and there no occupiers lined up yet but the units will be marketed in the summer.

The Parish Council responded to 12 planning applications throughout the year and our Chairman attended and spoke at two Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Development Management Committee Meetings where the Parish Council voiced objections on two applications. The Council was also happy to speak in support on an application by Lessiters chocolate factory which wanted to construct some car parking to the rear of the factory. As this land is Green Belt the decision had to be made by the Development Management Committee which approved the proposals.

Transport

The Parish Council received a number of complaints about the state of the verge between the church and Holly Road. The verge looked unsightly by being churned up by vehicles parking on it and the mud was spread across the pavement making it unpleasant and sometimes slippery to walk on. The Parish Council consulted with Herts Highways on the issue which was supportive and agreed to install bollards if the Parish Council could supply the funding. The cost of the project was £3,855.

At the end of 2019 County Councillor Richard Smith, supported by Woolmer Green and Welwyn Parish Councils and Woolmer Green and Oaklands schools, successfully applied to the Police and Crime Commissioner's Road Safety Fund for a second time. Highways will assess how the funding can be used.

Consultations

The Parish Council commented on the following consultations:

Government Inquiry on pavement parking
BT consultation on the removal of the pay phone on London Road
Herts County Council Budget Survey
Herts County Council South Central & North Central GTP Consultation
Herts County Council Railway consultation

Community

The fourth Wheels on Woolmer Green was held on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May. It was organised by Cllr Pinney and over 200 vehicles were on display. £695.49 was raised for the Balls to Cancer charity.

The sun shone on Village Day on 2nd June. The numerous attractions included a pet competition, a petting farm, a trick cyclist display, Woolmer Green Band and a Buddy Holly tribute act as well as lots of varied trade stalls.

Thank you Cllrs Phil Corke and Grant Pinney who organised the event.

The Parish Council, in liaison with our local first aid trainer, Sarah McGuinness of Critical Response Training, organised a free first aid course which proved popular with residents keen to learn some vital first response skills.

Carols round the Pond has become a very popular annual event so in order to keep everyone safe we were able to close New Road for a couple of hours on Christmas Eve. Cllr Pinney organised a colourful lighting display, Woolmer Green Band accompanied the singing and mulled wine & hot chocolate was served, which was very welcome as the weather was rather wet. A bit of rain did not dampen spirits and £142.54 was collected at the event. This was added to the collections organised by Woolmer Green Band at the Woolmer Green Market and the Datchworth lights switch on event. In total £243.64 was donated to the Letchworth based charity, The Multiple Sclerosis Trust, that had been nominated by Woolmer Green resident Bethan.

Councillors Corke, Dix, Hall & Horton all attended the Remembrance Service at St Michael's church. Cllr Corke laid the poppy wreath on the war memorial on behalf of Woolmer Green. Cllr Hall played in the Woolmer Green Band which accompanied the hymns and a band member sounded the Last Post. Cllr Dix read a poem at the church service.

The Parish Council was approached by some residents who were keen to see festive lighting in Woolmer Green for Christmas. The Council contacted a company for advice which specialised in erecting festive lighting to see what could be feasible and concluded that lighting up the yew trees in the churchyard could be achieved.

Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain the required permissions or plan the logistics of the electrics required in time for the Christmas period. The Parish Council was disappointed that it had to postpone the project until 2020 but it now gives us time to properly plan for next Christmas.

Woolmer Green Market has been going from strength to strength under the management of Tracie & Tara. They have planned lots of demonstrations and activities that have attracted more shoppers to the market. They also involved the Pre-school in helping to organise the second Christmas Fair. As a "thank you" to the loyal stall holders that continue to support the market Tracie & Tara arranged an evening buffet for them and Cllr Rob Horton went along to lend his support to the market team.

Cllr Grant Pinney arranged the New Year's Eve party once again so that the community could see in the New Year together.

The Parish Council was pleased to be able to support community groups this year and donated £300 to the Pre-school and £750 to the church. The grants budget also contributed £100 for new market signage and £50 was donated to the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal. The Council was also able to donate £250 to Woolmer Green Band from its Entertainment Fund to thank them for playing at community events.

As the financial year comes to an end we are all facing the immense challenge of coping with the coronavirus pandemic and the Parish Council is keen to ensure that its residents have the support they need at this worrying time. The Council called for volunteers from the community to come forward if they are able to help the elderly and vulnerable in the village and was delighted by the response. A number of volunteers have already been teamed up with someone that needs help with collecting shopping or medication and the Council has helped out in other ways.

As the population is being asked to stay at home and only go out when absolutely necessary the Parish Council will have to function in a different way as no meetings can be held and new legislation has been introduced to address this.

Statement of Accounts

2018/19	Receipts:	2019/20
45,878.30	Hall Lettings	41,597.72
6,619.54	Barleyfield's Family Centre	6,765.14
825.00	Security	375.00
1,662.27	Pitch Fees	1,289.00
425.00	Bar	0
758.30	Farmers' Market Income	940.00
1,614.07	Car Park	1,648.68
554.34	Allotments	568.39
138.86	Interest on Investments	153.78
55.29	Council Tax Support Grant	0
	Entertainment Fund :	
884.78	Village Day	787.75
1,103.00	Advertising	1,012.00
691.13	Other	1,289.08
1,503.00	Other income	750.00
62,712.88	TOTAL RECEIPTS	57,176.54
	Payments:	
38,618.66	Payroll	40,529.71
	Hall Maintenance :	
3,874.00	Insurance	2,919.95
5,690.20	Water, Gas, Electricity, Waste	6,383.80
2,860.12	License, Safety, Supplies	3,301.51
	Grounds Maintenance :	
6,041.87	Grounds	6,230.71
2,925.17	Playgrounds	905.00
554.34	Allotments	568.39
1,351.65	Office Expenses	1,494.04
150.00	Publicity	150.00
875.00	Audit & legal fees	625.00
805.70	HAPTC, CDA, CPRE	799.84
1,200.00	Grants	1,200.00
555.22	Sundry Expenses	1,041.15
	Entertainment Fund :	
754.46	Village Day	700.57
540.00	Newsletter	540.00
711.69	Other	1,019.13
	Non Recurring Payments:	
3,645.62	Hall Maintenance	11,136.77
5,500.96	Toilet Refurbishment	9,435.88
1,193.60	Planning Consultant	1,200.00
-	Mardleybury Road Bollards	3,855.00
-	Election	383.39
1,000.00	PPP	625.00
0	Contingency	0
78,848.26	TOTAL PAYMENTS	95,044.84
-16,135.38	Income less Expenses	-37,868.30
25,190.00	Precept	25,668.00
9,054.62	Surplus/Deficit	-12,200.30
53,081.76	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	62,136.38
62,136.38	TOTAL FUND	49,936.08