

Herongate and Ingrave Parish Council

Chairman's Report May 2015

The last year has thrown up some unexpected challenges for the Parish Council, primarily caused by road accidents, traveller incursions and recent planning applications and proposals put forward by and to Brentwood Borough Council.

After our first traveller incursion on to Button Common in May 2014, followed by a second a couple of months later, it was evident the Traveller camp problem was causing alarm and distress to many of our residents. Essex police in responding to the encampments, were negative as we were told the Travellers had a housing problem, which was not a policing matter, unless of course criminal offences were committed. Until Brentwood Borough Council produce a long term solution to accommodating travelling communities, the threat of incursions onto our countryside will remain.

To deter Travellers from being tempted to camp on Button Common again, the Parish Council have had installed a stout fence along the roadside of Heron Court. Funding for this was obtained via a grant from Essex County Council's Communities Initiative Fund. The Jubilee Committee kindly donated funds to replace the orchard trees that were damaged during the encampment in 2014. Many thanks to the committee.

Two major planning applications within the village – Hillcrest Nurseries and Brentwood Road south of Herongate gates - have been rejected by the Brentwood Borough Council. The Parish Council's own planning working party, led by Cllr. David Harman, have worked tirelessly researching and putting their objections to the council. Despite this success the Parish Council - and especially the planning group - remain vigilant of all planning applications whether on Green Belt or not.

The Parish Council received a belated invitation to comment on and report back to Brentwood Borough Council on its Strategic Growth Options to build approximately 6000 new homes in the next 15 years, throughout the borough. Residents were asked to not only respond to the Strategic Growth Options, but also the proposed Dunton Garden Suburb village, a possible 6000 homes. The lateness and poor level of communication to the residents and Parish Council was not satisfactory and we have since sent a letter of complaint to Brentwood Borough Council about this.

The Parish Council instigated Public Meetings about the proposals, which resulted in an overwhelming vote against building on green belt land. Like the public, Parish Council are fully opposed to building on green belt land too. However, as a representative Council we are fully aware that these proposals and applications may be forced upon us in the future by central Government.

It has been mentioned by some residents that a Village Plan may be a way to protect our areas from development. Although this may not guarantee satisfactory development plans that suit the majority of our residents, the Parish Council now have a working party specifically to explore the concept of a Village Plan.

Heavy flow, accidents and speeding traffic have become a major issue in the village and the Parish Council are working with Essex Police to provide a solution to this problem. Speed Watch is proving successful in slowing the traffic down, but being reliant on a handful of volunteers, could do with more support locally.

Striving to improve our villages, the Parish Council has been instrumental in working with Essex County Council and the residents to get some pot holes repaired in Park Lane, Herongate, as well as renewing village signs. During the summer the War Memorial at St. Andrews Church will be refurbished, and additional names added. Wooden flower planters, approved for positioning by Brentwood Borough Council and Essex County Council and funded by a grant, will be in situ around the village any day now. All these projects will be featured along with up-to-date news on events in our neighbourhood on our newly designed website: www.herongateandingravepc.org.uk Watch out for its launch very soon now.

In our professional capacity the Parish Council continues to work in partnership with Borough and County Representatives, Essex Police and other organisations within the villages. Our aim is to work for the betterment of the residents and community within Herongate and Ingrave, and we are diligent in trying to achieve this.

Regretfully our long standing Councillor and Deputy Chair David Harman decided after 10 years not to stand for re-election. Special thanks go to him for his long public service. To date his place has not yet been filled and has been advertised

I would like to personally thank all the Councillors for their dedication and hard work during the year. Special thanks go to Theresa Grainger the Parish Clerk for guiding me through my Chairmanship and David Tooke-Kirby the Responsible Financial Officer for providing the accounting information during the year.

Alan Kingsford

Parish Chairman and Councillor

19/05/2015