

**HERONGATE AND INGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
HERONGATE AND INGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 28TH MAY 2013
AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH HALL, INGRAVE, AT 7.00PM**

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I would like to thank all Councillors, both current and retired, for their support and commitment to their community. I wish to congratulate the Clerk in succeeding to become a qualified Clerk by gaining the CiLCA qualification..

The year has been as varied as the weather; our salting efforts being tested at both the beginning and end. Thanks go to ECC Highways for supplies and organization.

The heavy rain caused upset to regular maintenance at Peartree Pond with resulting heavy weed growth. This is now being addressed with a new water maintenance contract.

The visit of the Olympic Flame produced a unique event which the Parish Council joined with other groups to organize.

The Parish Council helped financially to support a Sunday bus service to Brentwood. Due to lack of usage, support has been considered no longer viable and the bus service has been terminated.

We agreed to support St. Nicholas Church with the preparation of an area for further local burial, which has been a long standing concern for many residents however there has been no follow-up from the Church on this matter.

A constant issue spanning the year has been a joint HIPC/WHPC initiative for improvement in broadband within the exchange area. This has received support from the local MP, the Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles and is now with the Superfast Essex Team who visited recently. Initially it was thought that if we could convince BT, they would upgrade the exchange which serves four villages and a number of business parks, in total some 600 small and medium business running from domestic and industrial premises. Included are several non-parish areas in the Warley Ward. The joint effort with West Horndon has been tremendous, overcoming the geographical boundaries of both Councils to encompass business leaders and domestic properties in a huge information campaign to encourage people to register their interest in better broadband. That demand is the primary issue is an economic fact and we believe that demand has been demonstrated. The two largest industrial parks are designated employment areas, with close to half the employment within Brentwood Borough but growth and their long term viability is stifled by poor broadband. For residents, broadband is now a major factor in the choice of a new home, ranking with education and access to transport links. Our wish for the future is to be part of it, with superfast broadband available to all.

To speak of the future is appropriate as it is thought provoking to me as Chairman where we should be going. Localism initiatives with Brentwood Borough Council have not just stalled but they failed to get off the starting blocks. We have a much increased bureaucracy which costs every local taxpayer. We have trimmed our budget by making it more targeted to those issues we know are important but to make the administration costs reasonable we need to carry through initiatives to improve the quality of life here. That implies support is required and that means ideas as much as anything else. We have reorganised the Parish Council to have nine primary functional working parties; each has a base of three Councillors but we would like to have residents join these working parties. We need to extend links with local businesses; the broadband project is a start. We can only improve with your support. Contact can be made through any Councillor, the new website or the Clerk.

CLLR ALAN MARSH
CHAIRMAN