



NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
MONDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022 AT 7.30 PM  
SOCIAL CENTRE BELL LANE NORTHCHURCH HP4  
3RD**

**Those attending the meeting were:**

Cllr Clarke Chair

Cllr Somervail Deputy Chair

Cllr Michela Capozzi

Cllr Beryl Edwards

Cllr Neil Pocock

Cllr Gordon Godfrey

Cllr Susan Rees

- 22/APM/01**      **To receive apologies for absence**  
**RESOLVED**, Cllr Clarke proposed to accept Cllr Pringle's apology for absence, seconded by Cllr Godfrey. Unanimously agreed.
- 22/APM/02**      **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**  
Cllr Clarke informed members that the report was circulated before the meeting. **RESOLVED**, Cllr Clarke proposed, seconded by Cllr Godfrey. Unanimously agreed.
- 22/APM/03**      **To receive reports on actions agreed at the last Annual Parish Meeting.**  
Nothing to report.
- 22/APM/04**      **To receive the Northchurch Annual Report 2020/21**  
Cllr Capozzi informed members that the Annual Report should read 2021/22. For ease of reference, the Annual Report is attached from the Chair and Planning Chair.
- 22/APM/05**      **Question Time followed by refreshments**  
Cllr Clarke involved Councillors, Clerk, and Members of the public on a short quiz centred around Northchurch. Cllr Clarke would like to appoint non-council members to help with future projects, in particular those that are familiar with the area. Phase two of the recreation ground has not been decided, however, Cllr Clarke would like to involve the community. Cllr Clarke emphasized that communication between NPC and the public needs to be addressed by introducing Facebook page and a noticeboard by Tesco.
- Questions**
1. Members of the public do not want to see toilets or permanent refreshment sites on the recreation ground, this is because it will attract anti-social behaviour. It was suggested possibly having a mobile refreshment van;
  2. Members suggested varnishing the swing pole (wooden), Cllr Clarke informed members that it would invalidate the insurance policy. The swing basket will be replaced;
  3. Cllr Capozzi informed members that Tree Monkey will start the work on the trees towards the end of June;
  4. A member asked about the contract NPC has with the Cricket Club for grass cutting. Cllr Clarke informed members

that NPC pays £100 per cut, and it is estimated that there will be 20 cuts from March to October;

5. A member pointed out that the Herons Elm end of the new path in the recreation ground is not level and there is a step which that causes difficulty for people with mobility issues. Cllr Clarke will look into this and take the necessary action.
6. A member complained about the length of grass around Park Rise and was informed grass cutting within DBC's remit must be reported directly to DBC.

### **Refreshments**

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## **NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL Annual Chairs Report May 2022**

Version	V22.0
Date circulated to Full Council	16-05-2022

# Annual Chairs Report May 2022

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## Section 1 Internal Achievements

### Website

The new website we created in 2020 is now well established with a clear layout. It complies with the transparency code, GDPR and accessibility standards. We have well thought-out aims that guide our activity and decision making backed by full suite of detailed policies which we have just reviewed and updated.

### Accountability

At the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Leadership in Action Conference 2019, most parish clerks ranked the use of personal email addresses for council business as their top data protection concern. To make our communications safer, transparent, and accountable, we have switched from using our personal email to parish council email addresses. We also paid for our excellent Clerk, Usha Kilich, to complete her Level 5 training which ensures we get the best possible advice and guidance.

### Services to Northchurch Award

Trish Pocock was the first recipient of our new 'Alan Fantham Award for Services to Northchurch'. For many years she has kept the recreation ground safe and secure; every day of the week, in all weathers, she has locked and unlocked the gates, cleared broken bottles and other rubbish, and gently pointed out the rules to anyone behaving inappropriately. She is the recreation ground's Guardian Angel, regularly going above and beyond the call of duty and thoroughly deserves this award.

### Grants received

We successfully applied for and received grants:

- £1,800 from Dacorum Borough Council towards our wildflower verge.
- £350 from The Queen's Green Canopy (to which we added £650) to help residents plant trees and shrubs in Dudswell alongside lock 46.

### Transferring streetlights to HCC

In 2021, we agreed to pay Herts County Council (HCC) £15,281.10 to convert, repair, and take ownership and responsibility for our 37 streetlights and poles. We will save money because we currently pay up to £2000 every year for electricity, and £400 for every bulb that needs replacing. In October 2021, HCC confirmed all the replacement streetlights met their safe and operational street lighting policy. They are putting the finishing touches to the legal documents and we should be streetlight-free very shortly.

### Opposition to DBC's plan for large scale housing

Along with most residents, we objected to DBC's plans for large scale housing:

- The Government-mandated growth target for this area is too high, out-of-date and does not account for post-Covid ways of working
- Building on Green Belt is not justified, and brownfield sites have not been identified.
- Infrastructure and transport are insufficient.

In response, DBC have withdrawn their plans, and we wait for them to publish new plans.

## Section 2 External achievements

### Recreation Ground

This year, we have spent over £100,000 improving the recreation ground. In line with the views of park users, we have retained large areas for walkers and casual use and preserved the views over the countryside. We have trained five councillors and 2 volunteers to carry out weekly safety inspections.

- On the cricket pitch side, we have enlarged the play area and installed new play equipment catering for older children. We have removed the unsafe concrete ramp and steps and created two level entrances suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. We have installed a tarmac path from the carpark to the play area and cleared and turfed the overgrown triangle of land in the far corner.
- On the Mandelyn's side, we have installed a woodland-type path with seating and planted beds aimed at providing access and relaxation for older residents. We have also installed an adult exercise area next to the car park.
- On the river side, we arranged for an arborist to survey the weeping willows so that we can keep them safe and healthy.

### Roadside verges

We have enlarged the contract with Sunnyside Rural Trust so that more verges are kept mowed and clear of rubbish. Last year, an unknown person mowed the wildflower verge undoing the initial sowing. This year we have repositioned this verge, reseeded the area and installed "Do not mow" signs. We have installed two new benches by the chip shop and repaired a bench in the recreation ground that was badly damaged by a car.

### Allotments

We paid £2400 to prune unsafe hedges and trees on the allotment boundary.

### Road Safety

We held public meetings to ask residents where they felt most unsafe crossing the road. They told us the most dangerous locations were:

- High Street entrance to Mandelyns
- High Street and New Road by St Mary's School
- High Street crossing by the Recreation Ground
- Darrs Lane S bend near the High Street

We have asked HCC repeatedly for traffic calming measures at these locations. However, HCC have preferred to spend their traffic calming budget on introducing a 20 MPH zone in Mandelyns. On a positive note, HCC has installed clear Welcome to Northchurch signs on the A4351 giving drivers a clear indication that they need to slow down as they are entering a built-up area.

## Grants given

We gave the following grants to local organisations:

- £1500 to Age Concern Dacorum to install a summer house on the allotment.
- £15,000 to the Cricket Club towards new practice nets.
- £25,000 to the Hockey Club towards a floodlit AstroTurf pitch.
- £600 to Northchurch United Charities
- £1,088 to St Mary's School Association towards Year 4 swimming lessons
- £3675.60 to St Mary's School Association to fully fund the school crossing patrol
- £500 to the Dance Academy to help towards their travel costs as they represent the UK at an international competition.

## The Future

We have lots of exciting possibilities: Recreation Ground Phase 2? Improving Bulbourne's water flow? Road traffic calming measures? An NPC Facebook page? I feel enormously privileged and grateful to be supported by such a friendly, positive and hard-working group of councillors and I am looking forward to another challenging and productive year!

**Jon Clarke,**  
**Chair Northchurch Parish Council**

## Report of Planning Committee 2021-2022

The Planning Committee of the NPC has met every three weeks during the last year, mainly virtually via Zoom but latterly in the Social Centre.

We have discussed many more applications than we did last year: upwards of 65. Many of these were small extensions allowed under the local development rules whereby applicants can extend up to three metres from their building without the need for specific planning approval. Other applications were for front porches, bay windows and roof lights. One application of particular interest was to create an underground gym, office and garage underneath the front garden of a house in New Road. This we objected to very strongly and the application was refused by Dacorum Borough Council.

Regarding the application to build in the back garden of Rosemary Cottage which is Grade II listed this was refused by DBC and the applicant went to appeal. We have now heard that the Inspector upheld DBC decision and refused the appeal.

As part of their requirements for producing their Local Plan DBC made a study of the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation which is a protected area and includes Ashridge. This study has identified problems to the area due to visitor numbers and identified a 12.6km "Zone of influence" surrounding the area. As a result of this Natural England has written to DBC and other local authorities within the Zone stating that they must not grant any planning approval for a net increase in



dwellings within the Zone until a mitigation strategy is in place. This is an attempt to limit the potential for an increase in visitor numbers. Planning applications for a net increase in dwellings can still be made and will be assessed, but no approvals will be granted until the mitigation strategy is agreed upon by all the local authorities involved. Our Parish lies entirely within the Zone and will, therefore, be affected.

We will continue to monitor all applications and comment appropriately in order to keep Northchurch the delightful village it is.

**Cllr Beryl Edwards**  
**Chair, Planning Committee**

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