



Hemingford Abbots Parish Council

Chairman's Report: April 2024 – March 2025

Introduction

The Parish Council has had another active 12 months. We submitted a further LHI bid for extending the 20mph zone along New Road and High Street, but this was unfortunately not successful (see below). We also engaged over an appeal to the Planning Inspector regarding a local application, which was cancelled on the first day of the hearing on technical grounds.

In February, we were invited by our MP, Ben Obese-Jecty (together with other parish councils) to engage with him in discussions regarding any issues that are exercising the parish – and I would like to publicly thank him for taking such a keen interest in the village.

Maintenance continues to be a significant issue affecting the parish, especially around flooding and the poor state of the roads – over which we are engaging with the relevant authorities on a continual basis.

Chair and Vice Chair

Since Zoe Ryall stepped down in May 2024, we have not had a volunteer for Vice-Chair for the Council. We also continue to post two vacancies for the position of parish councillor, and we would welcome any applications for these positions.

Parish Councillors

The Parish Council is made up of volunteers who donate their time to representing the village and protecting their amenity. I am sure that you will want to join me in thanking them all for their hard work and commitment, and in particular those who agreed to join in the last 12 months.

The Clerk and Meetings

Maxine Blewett continues to perform excellently as our Clerk, guiding us through the complicated world of local council administration.

Over the last 12 months we held 13 meetings (10 ordinary, 3 extraordinary), and continued with our programme of visiting other neighbouring Parish Councils to encourage positive relationships and identify ways we might work together. Also, since last May six neighbouring councils have been meeting informally on a quarterly basis to share useful information, and we acted together to apply pressure and help resolve the sluice gates at Saint Ives (for which £2m has now been allocated to allow the necessary repairs).

County and District Councillors

Our three District Councillors have been excellent, particularly Brett and Debbie Mickelburgh who came along to join us on the recent litter pick in March. The District Councillors have also undertaken in their own time the quarterly 'Meet your Councillor' sessions, which I know are greatly valued and appreciated by parishioners.

Community Groups

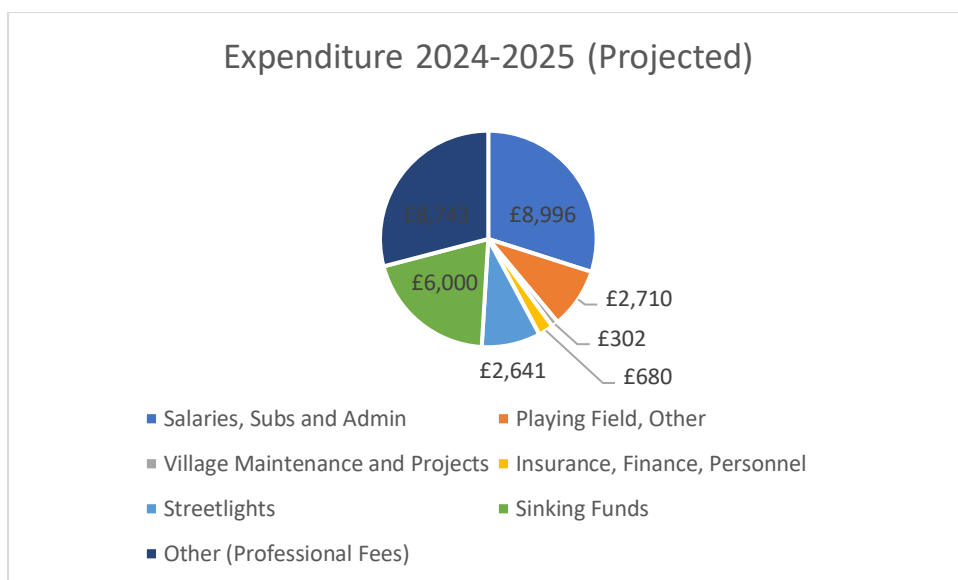
On behalf of the Council, I want to offer our sincere thanks to all the many members of the community who contribute to the running of the parish. This includes Ted Burleigh (representing the Trustees of the Peace Memorial Playing Field), Ken Martin (regular inspections of the village playing field), Anne-Marie Farmer (our footpath warden), and Sue Henderson (distribution of the Parish magazine). I also want to thank the large number of parishioners who help keep the village tidy, including participating in the recent litter pick. We are very grateful to you all!

Finances

Across the year the Parish Council had an income of £33,513 and spent £24,072, allowing us to continue to build up our sinking funds for the streetlights and the playing equipment. Our insurance renewal (£1,100) was slightly late and so will fall into 2025/26 payments, creating a slightly higher surplus than was expected.

Our largest item of exceptional expenditure was legal assistance (£8,743) over various planning applications, and related representation at the Planning Appeal held last August.

Our Annual Governance and Accountability Return will be submitted to the external auditor, PK Littlejohn following our Internal Audit, which is taking place mid-May, and following approval of the figures and accounting systems at our Annual Parish Council meeting to be held at the end of May. It is planned that the documents will be available for public inspection from the beginning of July.



LHI Project

HAPC submitted an application to extend the 20mph zone down High Street to the Pavilion and approximately 100m down New Road to the entrance to the village. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful, with only 8 of 101 bids approved due to limited funds. However, the white lines at the entrance to New Road were repainted, and we continue to seek alternative ways to make this junction safer.

Village Projects and Maintenance

Streetlights

The Parish Council continues to build up the street-light sinking fund. We had to repair one light near the entrance to the village, and further repairs to other lights are underway. I appreciate that some of these have taken longer than expected, but spare parts are becoming increasingly difficult to source, and we are also reliant on our outside contractor to undertake the work.

Drains, Flooding, and Roads

Work continues to try to resolve the various drainage and flooding issues across the village, including visiting Eastfield House to review the work being done by Cambridgeshire County Council to map the various watercourses and ditches (the current mapping is more than 100 years of out date).

We also understand that appropriate funds have been set aside for an investigation of the condition of the various pipework across the centre of the village, to be completed in the next 12 months. However, this sum does not seem to include funding for significant repair work.

The Parish Council is also continuing to engage with CCC Highways Department to try to resolve the poor state of the roads, especially on Rideaway close to the bridge over the A1037. We have just learned that the work will be completed in June (and involve a road closure).

Dave Cook has been busy repairing various gates around the parish, and we have recently rubbed down and revarnished the benches on the playing field as well as making various repairs to the playground equipment.

Playing Field

Last year, the field hosted an event organised by the Flower Festival Committee to say 'Thank You' to everyone who gave their time so graciously to support the flower festival. We were also very pleased to grant permission for the Committee to use this again as part of this year's event.

Marcus Whewell

Chairman