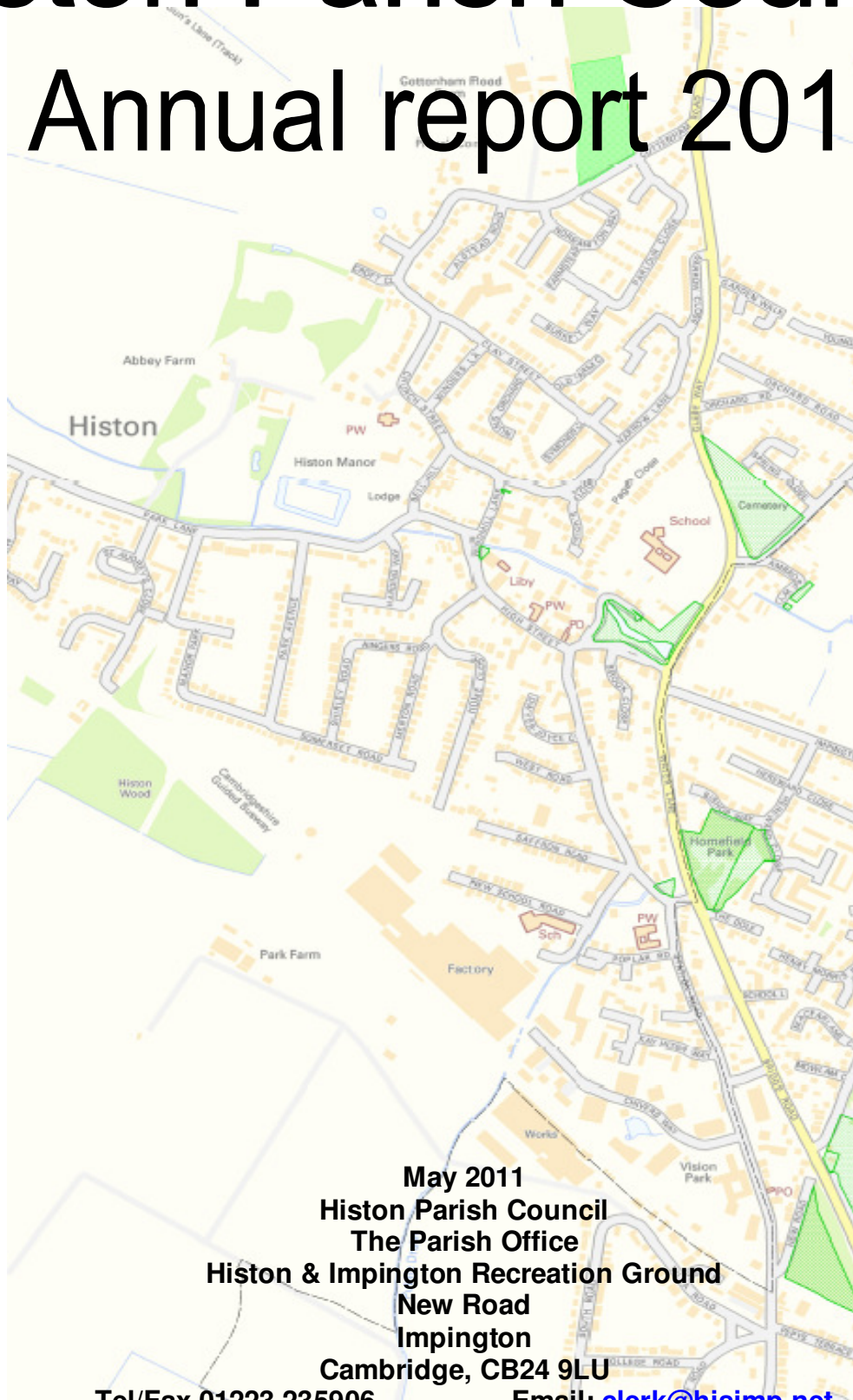


# Histon Parish Council Annual report 2011



May 2011  
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# **Histon Parish Council Environment Committee Report**

The Environment Committee meets quarterly throughout the year, and below is a summary of matters tackled during the last year. This is my first annual report having taken on the role of Chair from Cllr John Emmines. I am grateful to John for his continued involvement on the Committee and for the help and guidance he has given me to ease me in, so to speak.

## **The Green and Brook**

The Green continues to be well maintained and is regularly litter picked by Trevor Smith and once a month by the WI Group, which I have joined to give them moral support as numbers have dwindled over recent years.

Seats and Bins maintenance is on-going, and it is pleasing that any damage is acted upon by our Contractor, through our Parish Clerk. Grass cutting is now under our control and is one of the main reasons why The Green looks in good order.

Cllr John Emmines and myself undertook the cutting and clearing of old growth near the Brook edge in February, to encourage new growth, which received a positive response from our feathered friends not to mention Parishioners!

The Brook Rails and Posts are in need of Painting and Cllr Pene Nudds from IPC has kindly agreed to involve the Probation Service if possible to undertake this work this Spring. Materials have been purchased in readiness!

The silt from the Culvert between the War Memorial and the Brook was cleared in February by the County Council, and phase two of removing silt from the Brook is scheduled for later in the year. It was hoped that the silt from the Culverts could be used to build up low points on the edge of the Brook, but this was found to be contaminated and unsafe to use. However when the Brook is de-silted it is planned to use this for that purpose.

The Bollards around the Green opposite the Co-Op, are being damaged by reversing lorries probably from the Co-Op, and one in particular on the end, will not be replaced. The end parking space at that point will possibly be made as 'Double Yellow lines', which our HT&T Committee have instigated.

Some of the low metal posts along the South side of the Green, were removed by persons unknown, but are in safe storage. A decision on this will be decided at the Environment Meeting on 24/03/11.

The Christmas Lights new additional looms are in the budget for this year, so hopefully Christmas 2011 will have a better show for all to enjoy.

# **Histon Parish Council Environment Committee Report**

**(continued)**

## **The Children's Play Area near the Green**

Cllr John Emmine makes weekly inspections of this area, and has overseen improvements, maintenance and additions during the year, with more proposed under the 3 year plan of the CPA, which he drives forward.

## **Allotments**

These continue to be very popular at the 20 Plot Site in Gatehouse Road. Cllr John Emmine has been a plot holder of many years, and he therefore keeps an eye out for any problems etc. Also Cllrs Parish and Eade (our Allotments Officer) also regularly keep an eye when passing the Allotments.

Recently I attended with Pene Nudds an Allotment Workshop in St Ives. This gave me an insight into Rules and Management of Allotments and hope this will help Alan Eade when revising the Rules for circulation to plot holders in the autumn. This seminar was previously attended by Cllr Janet Diplock.

## **Burial Ground**

A site meeting took place earlier this year when Councillors attended. Discussions included:

- Removal of horse chestnut at entrance for cycleway (commitment to replant)
- Probation Service work on hedge boundary with Mill Lane
- Moss killer use, particularly in older part of cemetery
- Dead hedge on boundary with Glebe Way
- Path to tap area and path leading from "informal entrance" breaking up
- Watering can area improvements
- Top soil storage
- Path quotes to be requested for 3 paths northwards and one across top
- Pampas to be burned to regenerate.
- Shed repainting inspected
- Marble and stone items outside shed to be disposed of

Terry Farr the Groundsman was thanked for his work at the site

## **Footpaths & Bridle Ways**

Footpaths are the subject of an Annual Walkabout carried out in late summer/early autumn and I am joined by David Thurman and Steven Thulborn of County Council. Following each Walkabout an itemised report is drawn up by the writer and sent to the County Council, for action and during the year this is updated by removing items that have been resolved and new items added, so when we come to do the next Annual Walkabout later this year it will be more meaningful.

Bridleways tend to be used by many Dog owners, including Parish Councillors and we rely on their feedback of any issues they encounter.

***Councillor Cedric Foster, Chairman Environment Committee***

# **Histon Parish Council Planning Committee Report**

Planning committee meetings are scheduled to be held if necessary every 2 weeks depending upon applications with the occasional emergency meeting in between. The Committee comprises all members of the Council; the quorum is 4 and it does tend to be manned by a core of members who have an interest and experience in planning. Members of the public as well as developers are encouraged to attend to air their views; in the past year there seems to have been an increasing number of members of the public attending who's input is welcomed and useful.

The Committee has merely an advisory role over planning matters within and affecting the parish. However it is a role through which the Committee tries to ensure that the character and history of the parish is maintained. Basic work during the year has been in connection with developments affecting either the modification of an existing residential property or a residential development on one site.

The Committee also acts through its Tree Officer advising on tree works requests. The year has seen a number of tree works requests that the Committee has advised not to happen when unfortunately they have still been allowed by SCDC. The Committee continues to monitor these issues and has expressed its disapproval in a number of cases to SCDC senior managers. We were allowed our say in relation to the recent problems with Histon FC in their unlawful felling of trees next to the guided bus way.

Committee members usually attend SCDC Planning liaison meetings to ensure that our voice is heard.

Major developments that the Committee has represented Histon in have been A14 consultation (later an aborted project), North West Cambridge and NIAB site developments, SCDC Gypsy & Traveller Policy and Northstowe Retained RAF buildings on the Oakington site.

The sub-group of the Committee formed to draft a design brief for the former Histon station has not met recently due to other commitments; it is hoped to reconvene the group in the next financial year.

The Committee continues to protect the Green Belt surrounding Histon robustly particularly with regard to developments on Cottenham Road and at Moor Drove liaising in the latter case with SCDC enforcement section.

Two other positive issues have been dealt with during the year. We have continued to monitor and press for Section 106 payments from developers in the village in accordance with the new SCDC policy; receipts have been usefully employed to fund playground development and the extension of open spaces. In addition a very productive meeting was held with Exelcare limited (the owners of

# **Histon Parish Council Planning Committee Report**

## **(continued)**

Etheldred House) with regard to issues with local residents and with regard to the pathway alongside the east boundary of the site. For the latter Exelcare are funding replanting of the border alongside the pathway.

It has been an interesting year in our relationship with SCDC Planning; the department has shown a number of weaknesses during the year and we shall continue to press for strengthening of those weaknesses during the oncoming year.

***Councillor David Thurman, Chairman Planning Committee***

## **Histon & Impington Youth Committee**

The past year has been a mixture of consolidation of past successes and planning for the uncertainty of the future following 30% reductions in funding for youth work locally as a result of cuts to public service demanded by the new government.

For 2010-11 we budgeted to maintain and extend the clubs and activities initiated in the previous 12 months – all building stronger relationships between our Committee, our youth workers and the young people in the villages. We saw increased participation and leaps in confidence as groups of young people performed in public at the Junction to gain their bronze Arts Award and a team of young reporters contributed monthly to give a 'young persons viewpoint' in the local community newspaper, the Histon and Impington Courier.

The young people also continued to support the Thursday Sports Club on the Recreation Ground and the Connections Bus which visited IVC on Friday evenings. On a less positive side we have not yet managed to realise the potential of the use of the Lodge building at IVC which, although now in college ownership, remains unfurnished and unused. We continue to press for this facility to be brought into use for the benefit of our young people until such time as a larger, permanent, dedicated building for youth work is available.

In September we received a request from a group of skateboarders and BMX riders who wanted a site somewhere in the villages in which to practise their sport. We are working with them to identify a site, design the layout and raise funds. The need for provision for skateboarders and BMX riders remains the one constant during my many years involvement with the Youth Committee. Maybe next year this project will succeed.

Throughout the year we have also been supported by our local PCSO, Tony Martin, who often drops in to the Connections Bus and frequently meets and

## **Histon & Impington Youth Committee**

**(continued)**

talks to young people out and about around the village. He is an extra pair of eyes and ears and sometimes is able to provide us with first hand information on what some of the young people are thinking.

The restructuring of the Youth and Connexions services in the county in answer to the Government's funding cuts was completed in January this year. We are fortunate that both our locality manager Paula Mayes and our senior youth worker Andrea Cramp retained positions in the new structure. However the focus of youth work delivery is much changed with only those most in need and the most vulnerable being targeted. This means that there is now a greater need for the Parish Councils and the 'Big Society' to provide the much needed open access to activities for our young people. With this in mind our budget for next year is built to focus on those current activities which would not be justified for funding by the Youth Service under their new prioritisation guidelines.

***Cllr Hooda Abdullah, Youth Advisory Body***

## **Histon & Impington Mobile Warden Scheme**

This scheme is now run for us by 'Age UK'. 'Age Concern' and 'Age UK' have now amalgamated under the name of 'Age UK' but the personnel have remained the same. The scheme is designed to help elderly people continue to live at home for as long as possible. Our Warden, Mrs Gillian Berry, who has the advantage of living in the village, has been in post for well over a year now and is really enjoying the work. She feels she has good relations with her clients and has been very active on the new 'Older Peoples' Forum' doing considerable research into current and future numbers of elderly residents. She has also given a talk recently about the MWS to the St Andrews Men's Group, as she feels it is much harder to make contact with men who may need help.

At the moment she is looking after 16 people, 1 man and 15 women. Of these 5 are from Impington and 11 from Histon. There are 2 people on the waiting list. During the cold weather she found her work load was increased as several of her clients found it difficult to go out but she was able to ensure that they were all able to receive the help they needed. At Christmas the Link Committee provided the funds for her to buy a small present for each of them. At present the focus of extra help is on assisting with the digital changeover and the Census returns

Our new the Age UK Co-ordinator is Melanie Murdoch who has been working with us since she was introduced to the Link Committee by our previous Co-Ordinator at our meeting in September 2010. She was very impressed with the idea of the Older Peoples' Forum and a village co-ordinator and thought Age UK might be interested in regarding this as a pilot to be rolled out for other villages. Although

# **Histon & Impington Mobile Warden Scheme –**

## **(Continued)**

Age UK would not have the funds to help directly, she did suggest approaches could be made to local Housing Associations and Comic Relief.

Until now the Mobile Warden Scheme has been funded by grants from the County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, both Parish Councils and donations from The Feast Committee. SCDC had decided to withdraw their grant in 2012 but after Age UK made strong representations to them, indicating how important this grant is to all the Mobile Warden Schemes in the area and how counter-productive removing such help from the vulnerable elderly would be, the District Council has retracted its decision to withdraw this grant. However the County Council's three year contract with Age Concern came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. The contract has been extended until November while the Council review all their service contracts. Age UK will be submitting a tender by the deadline at the end of June and hope their contract will be renewed but in the meanwhile CCC funding only covers the next few months. The CCC, until now, has provided 30% of the Mobile Warden Scheme funding.

The Link Committee is made up of a representative from each of the Parish Councils, a resident of Histon, the Mobile Warden and the Age UK Co-ordinator. We would also like to have a resident from Impington on the committee but so far no-one has volunteered in answer to our request put in the HI Courier and on the Parish website. We meet twice a year to receive reports from the Warden and the Co-ordinator.

***Cllr Marian Cleaver, Village Warden Representative***

## **Health and Safety Report**

As I write this I realise I may be asking for trouble! Fortunately, another quiet year on the H&S front, mainly due to fast remedial action by several people preventing small issues becoming larger ones. These are mainly due to the dysfunctional behaviour of some users of Parish owned spaces and equipment resulting in occasional sharps risks in public areas.

Slick measures are in place within the Parish offices activating staff and others and this system works well with issues being reported quickly and dealt with efficiently with the help of our main contractor John Pollard and his crew. In addition members of the public have reported events and the Police are much more aware of the situation than in the past. The left hand does seem to be talking to the right hand at last with reported accidents at reasonably low levels.

Litter bins and bench seats and trees have taken the brunt of vandalism and it perhaps should be mentioned to anyone who complains about a high precept that we have a constant battle maintaining street furniture to an acceptable and safe

## **Health and Safety Report – (Continued)**

level. If you think health and safety is expensive try having an accident! Doing nothing is not an option these days.

Police liaison events have shown that such anti social behaviour remains as an issue within most of the villages and it is only due to good efforts of lots of folk that these nefarious activities do not develop into issues with possible serious health and safety implications. Links with the Probation Teams have been fruitful in removing graffiti quickly and with little damage.

Road crossing works around the villages should result in safety improvements for cars, cyclists and pedestrians although the new lights take some getting used to for drivers and walkers alike. Improvements to cycle ways will also help to segregate road users of all ages.

Traffic still remains an issue around the villages with conflicting interests having to be persuaded that a compromise is the only way forward. Life is a compromise if you think about it.

Community events have been well handled and managed including several events on the Green and during Feast Week. The installation of the new Christmas lights removed some H&S problems at a stroke.

There does seem to be a much greater safety awareness among PC staff and supporters and this helps to create a better understanding of H&S issues in the litigious age we live in. Many thanks to all those involved in raising the awareness of H&S especially in areas or issues that may be a Parish Council responsibility.

***Cllr John Emmines, Health & Safety Officer***

## **Highways Traffic & Transport Committee**

This was my first year as Chair, and so I'd firstly like to thank all attendees for their support.

The first item of the year was to increase the quorate level from 2 to 3, bringing it in line with current guidance, and I feel rightfully so. This does however mean that anything other than a full turnout is potentially a problem. To this end I would like to suggest a further one or two (voting) members be formally added to the committee.

Impington members regularly (and thankfully) attend, and this is a demonstration of the two Councils working together; conversely with no equivalent Committee for Impington an inconsistency is highlighted. I believe this would be an area where a Joining would greatly clarify and simplify governance across the two Villages.

I am attempting to address the interest in the Committee with a programme of invited speakers. A talk by the Chair of the Cambridgeshire Advanced Drivers and Riders (affiliated to RoSPA) is due later this month. I would also be keen to invite a talk by a local initiative with national coverage, CycleStreet.net which provides comprehensive route planning for cyclists.

The main issues dealt with throughout the year have been:

- Work on the B1049: new speed limits and cycleways
- Ongoing discussions on a 'Crossing by the Green'
- Removal of a parking space on The Green
- Various requests for signage by residents
- Stagecoach Issues
- Safety concerns around School entrances

The Committee as a whole has been wary of proposals for new signs as a way of addressing issues as this can lead to a cluttering of the 'street scene', and it is arguable whether drivers who are causing problems are likely to take notice. There are also currently deliberate experiments (e.g. New Road in Impington) with removing a lot of road markings to try to encourage a natural flow and this concurs with newer national guidance of reducing 'street furniture'.

With budgetary constraints the story at all tiers of Government, and epitomised by the abatement of the County's AJC (Area Joint Committee), the Parish Council is ultimately left with the dilemma of whether to pursue vital safety improvement works for the village such as a new Crossing at the Green. For the foreseeable future lesser schemes may well have to take a back seat, or be funded by third party contributions.

We have recently had issues raised by a number of schools in the area, but it is far more preferable to tackle the cause of these issues rather than their symptoms. To this end the institution must be an active partner in the solution.

***Cllr David Legge, Chairman H T & T Committee***

## **Finance Committee**

See Chairman's Annual Report at Annual Parish Meeting

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3 May 2011  
Histon Parish Council