

Wallington Parish Assembly Wednesday 13 April 2022: Wallington Parish Councillors' Report 2021- 2022

At the 2021 Assembly we covered 2 years because the 2020 meeting had been cancelled in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

Website

The Parish Council (PC) has set up a new website which is fully compliant with the latest accessibility legislation. www.rushdenandwallingtonpc.co.uk. This is now the home of PC meeting minutes, future meeting dates, neighbourhood plan information, etc.

PC Land and Facilities in Wallington Parish

The tree areas at the junction of Kits Lane and The Street, and The Spinney, are leased by the PC from NHDC. The PC have regular tree surveys and maintenance carried out. The latest survey did not reveal any urgent or unexpected works. Tree replanting in both areas has taken place, most recently last month, at no cost. Future tree planting on the same basis is likely.

The parish council now owns the "duck pond" and immediate surrounding land on The Street. A large section broke off one tree in the recent storm. Many thanks to residents who cleared the fallen tree, and to the volunteers who continue to maintain the pond for the community. The next phase of tree-planting is likely to include the pond surrounds. We have also been in contact with Herts County Council to request their help or advice with a possible wildflower area at the pond. They haven't been able to help us so far, but a DIY wildflower planting project is a possibility for Autumn 2022 if volunteers come forward to help.

We have no resource, financial or otherwise, for further land purchase or management activities but are happy to support wider community initiatives.

Highways and Drainage

Surface water drainage continues to be a problem from time to time, and some work was carried out by Highways in Autumn 2021. The drainage gullies in Wallington are not up to modern standards and will be an ongoing issue. Blockages will continue to occur, partly due to encroaching tree roots. The ultimate solution will be to upgrade the drains with liners, but HCC has no immediate plans to schedule this work.

An area of tarmac at the Eastern end of Kits Lane was broken up by water rising from below the road surface. This was reported to HCC Highways and a repair was carried out. The repair is itself breaking up now.

We will continue to monitor and report problems as necessary, with the help of the current district and county councillor. Residents can also report problems such as potholes on the Herts County Council website, and fly-tipping on or next to the highway on the North Herts Council website.

Defibrillator

The East of England Ambulance Trust has continued to maintain the AED which the PC arranged for our phone box.

No training is needed to use the defibrillator, so please don't hesitate if you think it might be needed. It is fully automatic so that you can't cause harm with it. The priority is always to dial 999 first, and if the person is not breathing then giving CPR is the next priority. If you are on your own in an emergency, use the village WhatsApp group to see if someone else can fetch the AED for you.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Councillors have been working on a Neighbourhood Plan for Wallington with the help of a working group of volunteers and a consultant, whose fees are covered by National Locality Funding.

For the last 12 months work has focussed on writing policies and gathering evidence to support the priorities set out by Wallington residents at the initial open weekend, and in the two surveys, which we carried out at the start of the financial year, covering Green Spaces and Conservation and Housing. We have also received and considered professional reports on local housing needs, building design, archaeology, and wildlife.

We have just held a second open weekend to consult on the draft plan, so that we can incorporate further comments and suggestions in the final version, which will be ready for "Section 14" assessment shortly, at which the plan will be checked to make sure it is compliant with relevant standards and legislation. The next stage after that will be a formal consultation on the plan for all the village to consider, and finally a referendum.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who have played a part in the plan, and to all the residents who have given their input. Our priority has been to represent all residents' views as well as we can, and the level of engagement from the village has been a great help with this.

If you would like to review the draft plan and comment, there is still time to see it on the website.

Planning

There have been several planning applications over the 12-month period. Where there were comments from residents, we represented their views to the Planning Authority, North Herts Council.

The most controversial planning application was at the Redhill poultry farm, outside our PC area. Because it affected Wallington Parish residents living opposite the site, we represented their views to NHDC and arranged a meeting at which residents could raise their concerns directly with the developer.

We have reviewed and updated the Parish Council's planning policies, to make sure we are in the best possible position to represent residents' views for any future applications.

Kate Heath and Graham Lamb

Wallington Parish Councillors

April 2022