

# Hartford Parish Council Annual Report 2010 - 2011

## 1. Introduction

The Council is pleased to report a successful year with a number of significant achievements, reported below. Proper procedures and transparency are important to good governance. The Parish Council's finances are under control and in a healthy state. The current financial climate in local government is still uncertain and budgets are expected to be adversely affected. Be assured your Council is keeping a close watch on events.

## 2. Council Members

Council members during the year were: Rita Hollen, Chairman, John Gibb, Vice Chairman, Richard Haffenden, Mary Hudson, Lawrence Salvoni, Tony Kershaw, Eira Bowden, Peter Winterbottom, Phil Herbert and Simon Bridge. Sadly, due to work commitments, Lawrence Salvoni and Tony Kershaw resigned during this year, however the Council co-opted one new Councillor during the year, Gavin Evetts. Full contact details for all Councillors are available on the website [hartfordparishcouncil.org.uk](http://hartfordparishcouncil.org.uk) and on the noticeboards located on The Green and Hartford Village Hall.

## 3. Staff

The Council is ably supported by Jo O'Donoghue (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) who achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration through the University of Gloucestershire. Jo is the focal point for all the Council's activities. Her dedication to the task has helped significantly to make this another successful year.

## 4. Finance

The Parish Council budget for 2010-2011 was £210,600 which included a figure of £135,000 to be spent on Hartford Village Hall for refurbishment, asbestos removal and the addition of a new meeting room. In order to meet this budget the Council raised a precept of £95,000 which represented a cost of £21.50 per year per elector. All other costs to be met from reserves.

## 5. Chairman's Report

Again in the last year there has been many national and local issues in Government that have affected the way in which Hartford Parish Council has had to adjust and modify their procedures. However progress and success in many areas has still been achieved.

The main background to our success in progressing the views and wishes of the residents of Hartford is our ongoing use of the Parish Plan. The Plan first produced in 2004, following extensive consultation with households has an action plan which is updated each year and used to target the parish council's objectives for the following year.

Hartford is among only a handful of Parish Councils in Cheshire who have produced a Parish Plan, a fact that we should be very proud of especially as the importance of this document is being realised by Government and now all Parish Councils are being encouraged to produce a plan in the near future.

Hartford's natural environment was highly valued by residents in the Plan and during the past year the parish council has continued to maintain and enhance open green spaces.

Following our village inspection a working group was set up and a great deal of ground work has already been obtained to greatly improve the Ann Todd Garden and the Grange Wood. This work is continuing which promises to greatly enhance both areas.

In July of last year Royalty wood was put up for sale. Councillors agreed to go to auction and bid for this 22 acres of woodland that skirts Beach Road and is such a natural habitat for wild life as well as being part of "green" Hartford.

The idea was to protect this land from housing development and preserve the area for the use of residents of the village.

Unfortunately the Council was outbid but thankfully the purchaser had the same preservation ideas as the Parish Council so hopefully this woodland will always stay just that.

The preservation of trees still features highly on our agenda and although many trees on our land are old we have not had the large amount of diseased trees to fell as in previous years.

The controversial decision by Cheshire West and Chester the previous year to introduce a left hand filter lane on Bradburns Lane with junction onto Chester Road has still been problematic due to landscape promises not being met. Negotiations are still in progress to reach a satisfactory agreement of maintenance for this important Hartford feature.

Still in the same area the successful forming of the Hartford Community Action Group last year, which is a partnership between Hartford Parish Council and a number of local schools has been successful in the completion of the mosaic on the northerly garden.

Planning remains one of the Council's high profile responsibilities and during the past year our procedures have been re-accessed to introduce a planning committee. The committee among a variety of considerations ensures that each application is fully measured against planning regulations and assesses how that application will affect neighbours and the local community.

However Cheshire West and Cheshire have introduced a new procedure in which in future they will not be sending paper copies of plans to Parish Clerks and they will only be available either at the Council offices or online.

Understanding the difficulties this could mean to smaller parish councils who unlike Hartford do not have the online facility at their council meetings Hartford PC agreed to take part in a pilot scheme to assess the viability of this decision. However we are now lead to understand that this pilot scheme is only available to one Town Council.

However parish councils are only consultees on housing applications lodged with Cheshire West and Chester (not licensing applications) and can only comment on their local knowledge relating to the application and advice on any problems that could arise affecting local residents. We also use the recommendations set out in the Village Design Statement produced by Hartford Civic Society which was accepted as planning guidelines.

Unfortunately this does not always receive consideration as in the case of the recent application for housing on the old Beach Tennis land at the rear of properties on Bradburns Lane.

In spite of many objections from local residents, our two Cheshire West and Chester Councilors and the parish council on a great

number of planning issues Cheshire West and Chester planning committee still approved the building of houses on this land.

During the past year the parish council has built on its relationship with the police and our dedicated PCSO – Andy Taylor who reports regularly at each parish council meeting.

We are always concerned with crime figures in our village and speeding and parking which rank high on the concerns of residents. Most councilors have shadowed our PCSO and found the experience most enlightening.

With the amount of schools in our area it is encouraging to learn that Andy has been targeting young people and doing an enormous amount of preventative work in schools.

David Barr continues to work extremely hard on Hartford's homewatch scheme although I am aware that there are still some areas in the village that are not yet covered by the scheme.

Our aim over the past few years has been to re-furbish and extend the village hall. It really was dated and did not meet health and safety regulations and recent acts for public buildings. Also the idea of providing accommodation for smaller groups was very appealing.

Finally last year we attained sufficient finance to start the project in December and all work will be completed by the end of this month. The new extension supplies a meeting room with separate entrance and toilet facilities (including disabled) which it is envisaged will enable the clerk to be available to residents at specific times for help and advice as well as providing accommodation for meetings and activities for smaller groups.

Hartford news the official free newsletter of Hartford Parish Council is produced for 10 months of the year and is still enthusiastically received by residents.

Our volunteer editor Chris Poole continues to produce an interesting edition each time but is always receptive to receiving news of organizations and interesting events relating to Hartford.

Many thanks to Chris for all his efforts in producing Hartford News.

Hartford News is just one way in which the Parish Council communicates with residents. We also publicize all meetings on our notice boards and details of all our activities are on our website.

Now that the elections have been completed our information leaflet giving details of who we are and what we do can be printed and delivered to every household in Hartford.

The clerk also provides a valuable help, advice and information service for the parish council which it is hoped will be extended with the extensions to the village hall.

Play equipment in our two play parks continues to be very popular with more equipment for small children planned for Grange Park

The parish council continues to work closely with Hartford Civic Society and with organizations that lease land belonging to the parish council. With the approval of the parish council the tennis club have extended their playing area by converting three grass courts into 2 hard courts to greatly enhance the facilities of the club.

The success of the film club has continued through their last season with a wide range and variety of films to include Made in Dagenham and the Kings Speech.

The parish council is very appreciative to Trish and Ian Parker who organise and promote each event and also to the Grange School for allowing us to use their theatre.

All the profits from the season go to charity which this year is expected to be just over £1000.00.

During the year information and support evidence has been collected in preparation for Hartford Parish Council to apply for Quality Parish Council Status which is an award of a commitment to excellence to your community.

The scheme follows the Governments white paper of 2000 with the aim to provide benchmarks to minimum standards for parish councils. In other words we must demonstrate that we work at a high standard and prove that among many things we communicate with the community, have effective and efficient meetings, account our finances correctly and produce an annual report.

It has been unfortunate that during the past year, for various justified reasons a number of councilors have had to resign. This has been a pity as we have lost their skills and abilities.

However we have gained new councilors who I warmly welcome and the Parish Council look forward to a long and productive relationship with you.

For those councilors who have longer records I thank you for your support over the past year.

I also thank our two Cheshire West and Chester Councilors who all through the last year have regularly attended our meetings and kept us informed of local events and decisions as well as giving support and advice on many issues.

Finally I would like to thank our clerk for her continued skills, knowledge and expertise which has helped to make my years as Chair very memorable and enjoyable.

I thank you all for your support and look forward to working with you in the coming year to continue maintaining and enhancing the village of Hartford through the Parish Council.

Rita Hollens  
Chairman 2010 – 2011

#### 6. Parish Councilors – elected 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011

	Name	Contact
Chairman	<b>John Gibb</b>	<a href="mailto:johngibb@hotmail.com">johngibb@hotmail.com</a>
Vice Chairman	<b>Peter Winterbottom</b>	<a href="mailto:peter.decco@btconnect.com">peter.decco@btconnect.com</a>
	<b>Richard Haffenden</b>	<a href="mailto:audandrich@tiscali.co.uk">audandrich@tiscali.co.uk</a>
	<b>Eira Bowden</b>	<a href="mailto:eirabowden@hotmail.com">eirabowden@hotmail.com</a>
	<b>Phil Herbert</b>	<a href="mailto:phil.herbert@lineone.net">phil.herbert@lineone.net</a>
	<b>Simon Bridge</b>	<a href="mailto:simon.bridge01@gmail.com">simon.bridge01@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Rita Hollens</b>	<a href="mailto:rita.hollens@talktalk.net">rita.hollens@talktalk.net</a>
	<b>Carole Smith</b>	<a href="mailto:stuart.smith10@tiscali.co.uk">stuart.smith10@tiscali.co.uk</a>
	<b>Gavin Evetts</b>	<a href="mailto:gavin_evetts@hotmail.com">gavin_evetts@hotmail.com</a>

#### 7. Parish Council Officer

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer:

Jo O'Donoghue  
Hartford Parish Council  
231 Hartford Road  
Davenham  
CW9 8JT  
Tel: 01606-41862  
Email: hartfordparish@btinternet.com

## 8. Parish Council Accounts

### **Receipts & Payments Account for the financial year ended 31 March 2011**

Receipts	2009-2010	Receipts	2010-2011
Precept	65,000.00	Precept	95,000.00
Rents	179.50	Rents	401.45
Investment Interest	211.30	Interest	172.01
		Grant/Big Lotteries mos	7,400.20
		Grant/CWAC 502	1,500.00
Returned payments	13,627.00	Film donations	2,111.03
		Bequest	1,000.00
		VAT claim	11,034.74
Income from Film Shows	2,321.20		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>81,339.00</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>118,619.43</b>
Payments	2009-2010	Payments	2010-2011
Salary	17,820.69	Salary	15,599.41
Administration	9,185.44	Administration	11,105.17
Maintenance	7,925.69	Maintenance	7,095.23
Annual Expenditure	14,580.13	Annual Expenditure	2,286.55
Capital Expenditure	20,753.35	Capital Expenditure	34,337.69
Village Hall	18,909.07	Village Hall	89,508.33
Rent	1.00	Rent	1.00
		Chair allowance	291.25
		BACS returned payment	(1,552.50)
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>89,175.37</b>	<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>158,672.13</b>
Balance Brought Forward 1/04/09	146,957.24	Balance Brought Forward 1/04/10	139,120.87
Plus Total Income	81,339.00	Plus Total Income	118,619.43

	<u>228,296.24</u>		<u>257,740.30</u>
Less Total Expenditure	89,175.37	Less Total Expenditure	158,672.13
Balance Carried Forward 31/03/10	<u>139,120.87</u>	Balance Carried Forward 31/03/11	<u>99,068.17</u>