

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025/26

The purpose of this report is to give a summary of what the Parish Council has been doing during the last year and to comment on the major issues that we are facing as a parish. There is more information available on our community website at <https://eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk/> and our Neighbourhood Plan website at [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

During the year, the Parish Council has held six Parish Council meetings and an Annual Parish meeting. Individual Parish Councillors took the following responsibilities.

Mark Orson – Chairman - Neighbourhood Plan Group representative and Parish Paths

Janine Bryant – Vice Chair - Neighbourhood Plan Group representative

Linda Harvey – Highways and Village Hall Management Committee representative

Werner Marx

James Beazley

Christine Law – Parish Clerk

We have two parish councillor vacancies and if you are interested in joining the parish council or at this stage would just like to find out more, please contact Christine Law our Parish Clerk or come along to the Parish Council meetings to see and meet your councillors

## Parish Website

Our Parish Council and Community website has been relaunched at a new location

<https://eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk/>

We have aimed to provide current local information and act as a hub with links to the services that residents will find useful together with, amongst others, our Parish Magazine, a link to the Village Hall online booking system where you can check availability and enter a provisional booking for yourself, Aerial Photos of our parishes to view and download, these include 360-degree images taken in the following locations across the parish:

- Terlings Park
- Pye Corner
- Eastwick
- Gilston Park Estate
- Gilston (St Mary's Church)

Links to services include:

- Planning Applications
- Recycling & Waste Collection – check your next collection day
- East Herts Report an Issue - submit issues to the relevant local authority, such as potholes, missed bin collections and more
- Roadworks and Road Maintenance - The Causeway one.network website informs you of all current and upcoming planned roadwork
- Gilston Area Information Hub - A hub for residents and businesses to see what construction works are due to be undertaken in the development of the Gilston Area as well as providing a means to report any estates management issues.
- Harlow and Gilston Garden Town
- The Gilston Estate – Places for People's website detailing the development planning stages
- Location of the 4 defibrillators supplied by your Parish Council

If you have an activity or event you would like to offer to Eastwick and Gilston residents you can email your text to [clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk) to have it published on the News page

Have a look at our new website and let Christine Law our Parish Clerk know if you have any suggestions for additional information links or other improvements at [clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk)

### **Estate Communications Website**

Places for People [PfP] has established a website to provide updates to residents about work being undertaken across the estate. At the same time, it makes reporting an issue or asking a question much easier through the pin-drop system. This generates an accurate What3Words reference which will speed up the time taken to identify the location of the issue. The new estate and construction comms website can be found at [www.gilston.info](http://www.gilston.info).

How to report an issue:

- You can drop a pin on the location of the issue and provide a description of what you would like to report. Villages 1-6 are transparent in colour, whilst Village 7 (Taylor Wimpey) has been shaded yellow to differentiate the two sites. This will be your opportunity to flag issues without worrying if the land belongs to PfP or Taylor Wimpey [TW].
- New pins will be marked as red and will be passed onto the corresponding team.
- Issues that are in progress and are being investigated by the team will be marked in orange.
- Once the team has resolved the issue, this will be marked as green.

The website functions will evolve over time. If you have any suggested improvements or features you would like to see added, please email [gilston@meeting-place.uk](mailto:gilston@meeting-place.uk).

PfP has established a liaison group that meet periodically to discuss progress on the project as well as estate management and enabling works. The invitation for attendees includes Places for People, East Herts District Council ward member, Hertfordshire County Council division member, Eastwick & Gilston Parish Council, Hunsdon Parish Council, Harlow Council, Member of Parliament for Hertford & Stortford, Member of Parliament for Harlow. In practice there have been 2 meetings during the last year

### **Community Forums**

East Herts Council [EHC] organises quarterly Community Forums as a channel of communication for residents and the Parish Councils that represent them with EHC and the Gilston Area developers PfP / TW. These have become useful sessions for residents to be briefed on key aspects of the development progress and to ask questions. The Community Forums should be supported, not least as residents of Eastwick and Gilston will be living in the middle of construction work for the next 15-20 years plus with the associated risk of disruption to our daily lives and these meetings provide the opportunity for residents to directly raise any concerns and to better understand the developers plans and timing of changes. Anyone wishing to discuss an item of interest or concern with an individual member of EHC or the Developers has the opportunity in the 30 minutes before the forum start time.

For those who have unable to attend, the presentations and other useful information including the planned programme of highway and other works can be found here <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/community-forums/gilston-area-community-forum>

### **Gilston Area Development**

The Parish Council has channelled our engagement with EHC, PfP the primary landowner for Villages 1-6 and TW who are the landowners of Village 7, through the Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group [HEGNP] chaired by Anthony Bickmore. Anthony makes an annual report to the Parish Council that provides an update and comment on all the issues and is published in the Parish Magazine, the community website [www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk](http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk) and the HEGNP website [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

The role of the HEGNPG is to jointly represent Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston Parish Councils, and;

- Is a voice for residents, holding developers accountable for promises to deliver a sustainable, high-quality development.

- Aims to oversee and shape the Gilston Area development to ensure it aligns with community hopes, values and future needs.
- Seeks to coordinate engagement between the developers and local authorities, especially East Herts Council.
- Is involved in reviewing planning applications for the proposed villages.
- Advocates for high standards in urban design, proper and timely infrastructure, environmental responsibility and community-focused planning.
- Continues to press for better interface with the existing communities, sustainable transport solutions, and “village master planning” principles.
- Actively monitors the agreements related to infrastructure, affordable housing, and the long-term governance of community assets.

The Parish Council is very keen for residents to be involved in HEGNPG activities - if you are interested or just want to find out more, please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk in the first instance - [clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anthony and the HEGNP team for their hard work and diligence. They are all unpaid and contribute massive amounts of time. Please see Anthony’s annual report to the Parish Council which is published in the Parish Magazine, the community website [www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk](http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk) and the HEGNP website [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk).

### **Spring Bulbs**

You may have noticed that the verges around our villages have new displays of spring bulbs? At the end of November, the PC funded the purchase of some 5,000 mixed daffodil bulbs and a big thanks to all those residents who volunteered their time to plant them – it makes a difference!

### **Planning**

We have had several planning applications to comment on during the year; most have been reasonably straightforward and non-contentious changes to existing properties. The major planning issues affecting our area are addressed by our Neighbourhood Plan Group that is mandated and sponsored by this Parish Council. Please see the HEGNP website [www.hegnp.org.uk](http://www.hegnp.org.uk) and Anthony Bickmore’s Chairman’s Report for a full update on the status and issues.

The planning applications are all available on the East Herts District Planning pages. Those you may be particularly interested in are:

Villages 1 -6 Outline Planning Application Ref 3/19/1045/OUT

Village 1 Master Plan Design Code Ref X/26/0135/CND

[The Eastern Crossing \(3/19/1051/FUL\)](#)

[Central Stort Crossing \(3/19/1046/FUL\)](#)

[The Outline Application – Village 7 \(3/19/2124/OUT\)](#)

Now that the Strategic Landscape Masterplan and the Outline Planning Application for Village 1 have been approved Places for People have recently submitted their Village 1 Master Plan Design Code for approval.

Works on the necessary supporting infrastructure, including roads, is scheduled to start early Summer 2026. Unfortunately, communication and dialogue regarding the likely and very significant impact this will cause to existing residents has been sadly lacking so far and we are pushing hard to achieve an improvement in this important area.

### **Highways**

We continue to work closely with Highways to ensure that Highway’s maintenance activities are carried out effectively and meet our local needs. As with all local services Highways work is governed by budget and availability of resources and getting work carried out in a timely manner can sometimes be a struggle. A

status report on all current Highways issues is made at each parish council meeting and published in our parish magazine and community website.

It is important that potholes and other damage to our local roads are reported as soon as possible. There is an easy-to-use pro-forma at [hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://hertfordshire.gov.uk) [Report a street light or pothole | Hertfordshire County Council](#). Please also inform Christine Law so that the Parish Council can include this information in the Highways issue status report that we use for overall monitoring and review with Highways.

### **Parish Paths**

The parish footpath network is a real asset. Copies of the parish paths brochure/map are available from St Mary's Church porch or Christine Law, our Parish Clerk. You will also find several display maps of the footpath network located around the parishes including both the Eastwick and Gilston War Memorial sites.

If you are aware of any parts of our footpath network that need maintenance including overgrown vegetation or fallen trees, please inform Christine Law our parish clerk and we will follow up with HCC Countryside & Rights of Way. Issues should also be recorded on PFP's estate and construction comms website at [www.gilston.info](http://www.gilston.info).

### **New Homes Bonus**

In previous years, the parish has received what amounts to windfall payments from the New Homes Bonus scheme. The New Homes Bonus is a government scheme which is aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permissions for the building of new homes in return for additional revenue. Under the scheme, the Government matches the council tax raised on each new home built for a period of 6 years. The parish council has received a proportion of this funding totalling around £240,000 which is invested through Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Investment Management Limited, see [www.ccla.co.uk](http://www.ccla.co.uk). EHC has since changed arrangements for distributing the New Homes Bonus monies which are now held by them in a central pot and Parish Councils can apply for funding for specific projects that are individually assessed before funding is granted.

The investment income from the received New Homes Bonus capital is being used to pay for additional items that are not included in our parish precept funding. For example, regular maintenance of the 4 defibrillators located strategically around the Parishes.

We welcome suggestions and ideas for how this money could be spent for the benefit of the community but are excluding any items that should be paid from District or County Council budgets. We will provide updates as matters progress via the parish magazine and website but if you have any ideas and suggestions for how this money should best be spent, please contact Christine Law, Parish Clerk, on 411646 or email [clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastwickandgilstonparish.gov.uk).

### **Parish Precept**

You will have recently received the booklet from East Herts Council outlining your Council Tax payments for 2025/26. Part of the Council Tax is made up of the Parish Precept which is set by the Parish Council to cover small running costs and several initiatives we undertake. The amount attaching to your Council Tax for the parish is a function of what we spend and the number of properties and their valuation bands in the area.

If you have views on how we should spend our money and if we should spend more or less, then let one of the Parish Councillors know or attend a Parish Council meeting. We are always keen to hear views and enjoy the interaction with members of the public at the meetings – all are welcome.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, planning matters and engagement with the Gilston Area developers, PFP the landowners for villages 1-6, TW, the landowner of village 7 and EHC our planning authority have been the parish council's majority activities this year, other parish council matters have been relatively quiet.

As noted, we now have two parish councillor vacancies and if you are interested in joining the parish council or at this stage would just like to find out more, please contact Christine Law our Parish Clerk

I would like to thank our District Councillor John Dunlop and Eric Buckmaster, our County Councillor, for their continued help and support.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated and hardworking team of Parish Councillors. They devote a lot of their time for the benefit of the community which is unpaid, and they claim no expenses. Thanks also to Christine Law, our Parish Clerk.

Mark Orson