

## **Walkern Parish Council Report**

The Parish Council Meeting was held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at Walkern Sports and Community Centre. This report covers some of the issues we have been dealing with over the last few months. The full minutes of the meeting are available on the Parish Council website and on the Parish Council Notice Board outside Budgen's shop.

### **A Wilder Walkern**

We held a very constructive meeting with Tim Hoskin, head of Environmental Sustainability at East Herts District Council, on February 18<sup>th</sup>. We discussed various initiatives that might interest residents and be achievable in the short term. He confirmed our idea that an assessment of areas within the Parish where wilding could take place is an important first step. We held a very useful meeting with Tim Hill, Conservation Manager at the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in January and his organisation is able to help with such an assessment but it would need funding.

The Council has received over 70 responses from residents expressing their interest in supporting the project. Of course, we understand that not all of those who responded are able to offer practical help but we were very pleased that 38 people attended the kick off meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March.

There was a short presentation from Steve Mason about a Terra Carta project that residents might like to be involved in. The project includes core themes such as caring for nature and wildlife, reducing waste, saving energy and supporting local and sustainable choices. Each theme has 2 to 4 simple commitments, some of which residents might be doing already such as avoiding using pesticides in the garden or switching off lights when leaving the room.

As well as giving an overview of what we have achieved so far, the meeting gave residents a chance to share ideas on how they could participate within their own gardens as well as in village areas; small is just as important as large projects. There were some lively group discussions and a feeling emerged about priorities and what our immediate aims should be. Participants expressed strong interest in focusing on nature and ecology as well as

community and well-being, including activities for both children and adults. Ideas on how projects could be funded were also discussed

It was felt that a regular dedicated page in the Walkern Journal and a new Wilder Walkern website would be helpful to promote interest in the project. Until the website is developed updates and information about Wilder Walkern can be found in the Wilder Walkern section of the Parish Council website. Parish Websites, who already host our Parish Council website, have said they could also host an additional site for us. It may be that someone attending may have the skills to design such a website.

A more detailed report on the meeting is in the article entitled Wilder Walkern within the journal.

### **Planning**

Councillors discussed with Tom Deffley, District Councillor, our growing concerns regarding the way our representations are being handled within the East Herts District Council planning process.

The Council responds in detail to many of the applications which we receive and we are not confident that these comments are adequately taken into account or even accurately reported in the summaries given by the Planning Department.

We are also troubled by recurring issues with the planning portal, where attachments submitted as part of the application have not been visible to us.

We have contacted EHDC expressing our concerns and await their response.

### **Street Lighting**

The Parish Council is responsible for the cost of repairing some of the High Street lamps, though these repairs must be carried out by Ringway, the recommended contractors. We have contacted Ringway to repair a lamp in the High Street with an LED fitting at a cost of £777.78 including VAT , a large proportion of our funds.

There are also two other lamp posts in the Village where the Victorian fittings have been stolen. The clerk will contact Ringway for a quote for the repair.

## **National Association of Local Councils**

In February, Peers in the House of Lords continued their scrutiny of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, raising concerns about the government's proposals for neighbourhood governance. NALC is backing their commitment to "emphasise the need to protect and strengthen parish and town councils as the most local tier of democratic representation".

Last week the Chief Executive of the association spoke at a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs training day for civil servants working on climate adaptation and rural policy. He briefed them on the work of parish and town councils, developments in the sector and our role in helping to tackle climate change and asked them to help raise understanding of the sector across Whitehall. They agreed to consider visits to parish and town councils.

**The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 at the Walkern Sports and Community Centre commencing at 7.00 pm.**

**Christine Nudds, Parish Councillor**