# December Parish News

## Notes from Gernon Road

The budget setting process has begun. Savings will have to be made again this year, not least because we are facing the reality of a negative Revenue Support Grant from central government. One of the tough decisions that this has lead to is the recent one to remove the play equipment from a number of parks in the urban parts of the District. This does not affect Knebworth as play equipment is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Hitchin Town Hall is fully operational after the refit. The last Southern Rural Committee of last (calendar) year took place in the main hall, and many more meetings will take place there while the District Council Offices at Gernon Road are being refurbished. Access to the North Herts Museum via the entrance at 14/15 Brand Street not current possible because of a dispute with the owner of this site.

## Proposal to designate a second AQMA in North Herts.

The Paynes Park area of Hitchin has been designated an Air Quality Management Area. This makes it the second area in North Herts to receive this designation, the other being the Stevenage Road area, also in Hitchin. This means that concentrations of nitric oxide are at risk of exceeding an annual mean of 40µg/m^3 and a one-hour mean exceed 200µg/m^3. An air quality monitoring station will be installed at the site if the proposal is approved. Results of the pollution monitoring will be published at [hertsbedsair.net](http://www.hertsbedsair.net/) although the site does not seem to have been set up yet.

## Local Plan Consultation

The local plan consultation finished on 30 November, but the officers still have a lot of work to collate and organize the various arguments for and against the plan before it is submitted for examination by the Inspector. Every single response will be uploaded to the website in their entirety. There were around 8,400 responses to the Preferred Options consultation in 2014, arguably less important than the latest one, so this is likely to be quite a job in itself.

It is hoped that the plan, along with the responses, can be submitted in March 2017. Once the inspector has had a chance to examine the documents there will be a public examination, which will hear oral submissions from those who have registered. Finally the inspector will produce a report. This will recommend acceptance, rejection, or acceptance with modifications. This should happen some time in the second half of 2017.