

**Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2002 at 7.15 pm**

Present:	Mr. D. Stock (Vice-Chairman)	Mr. C. Clark
	Mrs. S. Davies (after 7. 27 pm)	Mrs. C. Dinnin
	Mr. V. Dunhill	Mr. D. Filer
	Mr. I. Knight	Mrs. H. McCash
	Mr. J. Meischke	Mr. J. Meischke
Members of Public:	Mr. M. Freeman	

In the absence of Mr. Poulton, Mr. Stock took the chair.

**1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Poulton.

**4 Mike Freeman – Introduction to the Flood-Warden Scheme**

Mr. Stock welcomed Mr. Freeman to the meeting.

Mr. Freeman (of 10 Rivershill) said that he and Avril Gardiner (of 32 Rivershill) had been appointed as Flood Wardens for Rivershill. This is as part of a scheme introduced by the Environment Agency to alert residents in flood-risk areas of any potential threat of flooding. The areas identified to the Environment Agency (by the Parish Council) as being at risk of flooding are properties bordering the River Beane in Lammas Road, the end of Beaneside, parts of the High Street, Rivershill, Beane Road and Mill Lane.

Mr. Freeman showed Parish Councillors pictures he took in 1992 of his house and garden during the floods. The Clerk explained how the flooding affected her property at 9 Beane Road and said that the water level was higher than some sections of their three-foot high chain-link fencing, allowing a boat that was attached to the fence to float over it. The Environment Agency has identified house numbers 10 and 11 as being under threat of flooding. He said that the owners of number 11 Beane Road do not feel they have a problem because the previous owners had said that during the big flood in 1968 the water did not enter the house but just lapped against the doors to their dining room.

Mr. Freeman urged all owners of houses near the river to check their insurance policies for flood cover.

Mrs. Dinnin said that when she moved into number 4 Beane Road, several insurance companies had refused them cover, although her property is not considered to be under threat of flooding.

He said that the responsibility of the Flood Wardens is to inform residents affected in their area when a severe flood warning is reported.

Mrs. Dinnin and the Clerk volunteered to be Flood Wardens for Beane Road. Mr. Freeman said that he would contact residents in Lammas Road to find out how the flooding affects them and suggest that a Flood Warden will need to be appointed.

Mr. Freeman said that he would be contacting the Environment Agency again to progress the Flood-Warden scheme forward and would report back to the Parish Council accordingly.

Mr. Stock thanked Mr. Freeman for taking the time to introduce us to the Flood-Warden scheme.

Mr. Freeman then left the meeting.

Mrs. Davies arrived at the meeting.

**2 Declaration of Interests**

Mr. Clark and Mr. Stock declared a personal interest in item 7 a, Planning applications - Windrush, Whempstead, erection of conservatory. Mr. Clark owns and lives in the property involved. Mr. Stock said that his connection was somewhat remote in so much as his daughter is formally engaged to be married to Mr. Clark's eldest son.

Mr. Clark and Mr. Stock will therefore leave the meeting when the item is discussed.

**3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report**

- **May Guerne**

Mr. Stock said that Stuart Barnes of May Guerne rang the Clerk on 20<sup>th</sup> November re our letter asking them to replace any trees that they had removed from railway-land. We are told that the trees/shrubs cut down near the Railway Bridge at Watton Green were predominantly blackthorn. May Guerne's policy is to leave the roots and allow the blackthorn to re-shoot, which they say generally works really well.

Mr. Filer agreed to inspect the site and liaise with Mr. Stock about any further action required.

**Action: D. Filer/D. Stock**

- **Use of Parish-Council-Headed-Paper**

Due to some recent misunderstandings, Mr. Stock wanted to remind all Parish Councillors of our policy with regard to official correspondence on Parish-Council-headed paper. With this in mind, he had prepared a statement on the subject for inclusion in these minutes.

He then read out the statement as follows (note that the second paragraph has been modified slightly to clarify certain points).

‘The current policy with regard to official Parish Council correspondence is that it must be typed on headed paper and processed by the Clerk.

Although a letter can be from an individual Parish Councillor, it is the Clerk who transfers the text onto the headed paper. The Parish Councillor involved is then given the letter to sign before it is posted. (The original text can be given to the Clerk in hardcopy or electronic form.)

This long-standing policy has been in place for some years now and was introduced to resolve a series of problems that caused much trouble and embarrassment to the council, not to mention the amount of work and distraction involved. In the main, problems tended to be caused by Parish Councillors writing to other individuals, organisations and agencies without the knowledge and consent of the council. We must always ensure that all correspondence represents the view of the Parish Council as a whole, and not that of an individual.

In brief, the current policy is to ensure that:

- a) all mail is sent from and addressed to one location, i.e. the Council Office at 9 Beane Road
- b) mail, in and out, can be copied and tracked by the Clerk
- c) if mail is received for someone who is not available (e.g. on holiday), it can be passed to another Parish Councillor for action if required
- d) all letters are filed in one location and can be easily retrieved on-demand (it is important that our Clerk is always fully aware of what is going on; we always expect her to answer when we ask, regardless of the subject matter)
- e) the Clerk can intervene if she thinks there is a problem or a misunderstanding, e.g., a letter contradicts or duplicates another, or its contents does not represent the view of the PC as a whole
- f) we have a clear policy that can help and protect future Parish Councils from the problems that have been encountered in the past (as we do with other items such as licenses, check lists, etc.).

Because the policy has worked well, it should continue in its current form and without exception.’

The subject was then discussed at length and some points of detail were clarified.

During the discussion, the subject of the use of e-mails was raised, e.g. when a Parish Councillor is communicating with a contact by e-mail instead of the telephone. In response to a suggestion made by Mr. Clark, it was agreed that all e-mails from Parish Councillors must include a standard disclaimer (e.g. to make it clear that the content of the e-mail does not necessarily represent the view of the Parish Council or bind it to any agreement).

An appropriate disclaimer to be proposed.

**Action: D. Stock/N. Poulton**

Mr. Stock then proposed that the Parish Council’s policy on the use of its headed paper be maintained in its current form, and without any changes or exceptions. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

It was also agreed that all new Parish Councillors must be made aware of this policy as soon as they become members. The Clerk to note and implement as and when appropriate.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Conservation Society**

The Wotton-at-Stone Conservation Society has written to the Parish Council asking for the grant of £100 that we agreed to give towards the cost of way-markers for their Millennium Walk project (a copy of the invoice has been received).

Mr. Stock proposed that the Parish Council send a cheque for £100 to the Wotton-at-Stone Conservation Society. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## 4 Mike Freeman – Introduction to the Flood Warden Scheme

This item was taken after item 1, Apologies for absence.

## 5 Minutes of the last meeting

### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002**  
The following amendments were made to the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002.
  - Page 4, Item 5 a, Specific Items - Ornate Village sign  
In the second to last sentence in the final paragraph, 'Mr. Would' should read 'Mr. Mould'.  
In the final paragraph, Mrs. Manuel should read 'Mrs. Mannall'.
  - Page 8, Item 6 b i, Reports - Sportsfield - Report - Footpath access along Rectory Lane  
The start of the final bullet following the report. 'Mr. Davies' should read 'Mrs. Davies'.
  - Page 4, Item 5 e, Specific Items - Childrens' recreation  
Mrs. Davies said that she did not accept the penultimate paragraph to be a true record of what she said. She agreed to prepare a revised minute for inclusion in the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

The minutes could therefore not be accepted and signed as a true record.

### b) Review of actions

- **Traffic-calming issues at Whempstead**  
Mr. Clark said that he only found out, when he received the Parish Council minutes, last weekend that he had been authorised to proceed with this matter. He has tried to make contact with Valerie Weaver of the Highways Partnership, but has been unsuccessful because she is off sick from work. **Action: C. Clark**  
**Note:** Mr. Stock has asked the Clerk to give all Parish Councillors a list of action points well in advance of the next meeting. This shall be done as a matter of routine from now on.
- **Liase with Police authority re traffic-calming issues at Whempstead**  
Mr. Clark to proceed with this matter, together with the above item. **Action: C. Clark**  
Traffic-calming in Whempstead to be placed on the agenda under Specific Items **Agenda: 01/03**
- **Accept Doe Sport's quotation to repair the kicker boards and tension the perimeter wire-fencing**  
This action point has been completed.  
Doe Sport has written to confirm that they will do the work.
- **Issue all Parish Councillors with the 2003/2004-draft budget**  
This action point has been completed.
- **Ensure that damage to surface of footpath near barrier on footpath leading to Church Lane is carried-out**  
Mrs. McCash said that she had contacted the Rights of Way officer and he informed her that he was not aware of a problem (Mr. Dunhill had previously reported the matter to him). He has now made a site visit and agreed to rectify the problems in the New Year.  
This item to be placed on the agenda under Specific Items until the matter has been resolved. **Agenda: 01/03**
- **Find out the cost of two trophies**  
Mrs. Dinnin has visited Concord Trophies and obtained a brochure and pricing on trophies.  
She said that the cost of individual 'keepsake' shield-trophies start at £4.50 each, plus 10p per letter for engraving. Large shields cost from £35, plus the cost of engraving.  
As previously agreed, the purchase of trophies is to be deferred until May 2003, when the new council has been elected. **Agenda: May 2003**
- **Visit Wotton-at-Stone Millennium Mayfayre Committee re design of Ornate Village sign**  
Mr. Stock said that he, Mrs. McCash and Mrs. Dinnin had met with the Wotton-at-Stone Millennium Mayfayre Committee and told them of our ideas and plans re the design and manufacture of the sign. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council shall continue with its current plans and meet the committee, as and when required, to discuss progress.
- **Visit Mr. Mould (the sign maker) on 20<sup>th</sup> November re design of Ornate Village sign**  
Mrs. McCash reported that she and Mrs. Dinnin had visited Mr. Mould to discuss the design of the Ornate Village sign. They supplied Mr. Mould with photographs and drawings and he has agreed to send quotations for several different options, ranging from the 'Rolls Royce' styles in hand-carved solid Oak to more basic ranges.

- **Visit the Land Registry in Stevenage re the ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull Public House**  
This item to be discussed under 6 b, Specific Items - Ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull Public House (on pages 5 and 6 of these minutes).
- **Write to the Deputy Information Commissioner re Freedom of Information Act**  
This action point has been completed.
- **Issue new licences (valid to up to the end of 2002) to all the youngsters using the childrens' recreation area on the Lammas**  
This action point has been completed.
- **Attend next Area Forum meeting**  
This action point has been completed.
- **Draft a response to the Minerals Local Plan Review for discussion**  
This action point has been completed.  
Refer to item 6 e, Specific Items - Minerals Local Plan Review (on page 6 of these minutes).
- **Give the Clerk amendments to Village Directory as soon as possible**  
The Clerk said that she had received no further amendments to the Village Directory.
- **Update and copy the Village Directory for distribution throughout the village**  
The Clerk asked if Parish Councillors would like to be given a copy of the updated version of the Village Directory before it photocopied for distribution with the January issue of the Parish News. It was agreed by all Parish Councillors that this was not necessary.  
It was also agreed that the contact name and telephone number for Glebe Court be included in the Village Directory.  
The Clerk to act accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**  
Mr. Meischke said that the lists of Parish Councillors in the Community Hall give his previous home address.  
The Clerk to update the lists accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Report back to the Parish Council about the repair of the fire alarm**  
Mr. Meischke confirmed that the alarm has now been repaired at a cost of £231.24 including VAT.
- **Instruct Turners to carry-out work to hand-basins in the external toilets and the toilets adjacent to the changing rooms**  
This action point has been completed.  
Turners have now completed all the work.  
Mr. Meischke said that the water pressure in the showers is much improved. However, due to bad weather, the footballers have not used the facilities recently and are therefore not able to give their comments on the increased pressure.
- **Submit a claim to Cornhill Insurance for all the damage done during the storm**  
This action point is ongoing. **Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop**
- **Apply to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for confirmation of the byelaws**  
This action point has been completed.  
Refer to item 7 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Byelaws - Watton Green and the Lammas (on page 9 of these minutes).
- **Give Mr. Stock comments on the Countryside Management Services report on Watton Green**  
Mr. Stock said that he received comments from four Parish Councillors only and therefore has assumed that the remaining Parish Councillors were happy with the report on Watton Green. This was confirmed.  
Refer to item 7 a, Environment Sub-Committee – Watton Green (on page 9 of these minutes).
- **Accept S. C. Dass quotation for work to be carried-out to the Memorial in the next financial year**  
This action point to be completed after the 2003/2004 budget has been approved. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Investigate tree problem on the Lammas**  
Mr. Dunhill said that John Westerby (the owner of 51A High Street) has removed the tree on his property, which was in danger of falling onto the public footpath on the Lammas.  
Mr. Dunhill has cleared the top of a tree that fell onto the Lammas footpath during a recent storm. The area needs some further tidying. **Action: V. Dunhill**
- **Remove 'salt bin located at garages between Glebe Close & Rectory Lane' from monthly report**  
This action point has been completed.

- **Contact the owners of the trees overhanging the entrance to the allotments**

This action point has been completed.

**Note:** This item to remain on the agenda under Specific Items to ensure that overhanging trees area cut back. **Agenda: 01/03**

- **Inform the Clerk which hedges are causing an obstruction to the footpath in Rectory Lane**

This action point has been completed.

- **Contact EH Highways Partnership and the Police about footpath in Rectory Lane**

This action point has been completed.

Mr. Stock read out Miss Valerie Weaver's (Hertfordshire Highways) reply dated 5<sup>th</sup> December.

**'Re: Rectory Lane, Watton-at-Stone – Obstruction of Footway**

Thank you for your letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 2002 regarding the above.

The Area Engineer, Mr. Bishop inspected these problems on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2002 and has sent appropriate letters to the owners of the hedges in question.

I will discuss the issues of the pavement parking at my next liaison meeting with Hertfordshire Constabulary.'

Mr. Stock said that PC Ivens had phoned Mr. Poulton on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December and informed him of the following.

- Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December – there was a police presence in Rectory Lane and verbal warnings were given to numerous drivers re parking problems.
- Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December – the police returned and noted that no one was parking illegally.
- The police are to make random checks in the future.

Mr. Filer said that there is a lot of green space in Rectory Lane and suggested that some of this could be made into parking spaces. Mrs. Dinnin and Mrs. McCash said that parents should be encouraged to walk their children to and from school. It was also suggested that any additional parking facilities would look unattractive and end up being used by the local residents and thus make the problem worse. After a brief discussion on the subject, it was agreed not to pursue the suggestion further.

- **Write to EHDC re planning application for The Old Chapel, Whempstead**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write to EHDC re 2003 Summer Playscheme**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write to the Environment Agency re flood-event data gathering**

This action point has been completed.

- **Notify Mr. Freeman that he is invited to speak at the Parish Council meeting in December**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write to HCC to strongly oppose the proposed Airport Expansions**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write article for inclusion in the Parish News**

This action point has been completed.

**c) Action points outstanding for more than two months**

- **Install dog-fouling-penalty signs on allotments**

Mr. Meischke said this action point remains outstanding because the public footpath signs at Glebe Court had still not been reinstated, and one of the dog-fouling-penalty signs needs to be fixed to it.

**Action: J. Meischke**

## 6 Specific Items

**a) Ornate Village sign**

This item was discussed under 5 b, Review of Actions - Visit Watton-at-Stone Millennium Mayfayre Committee re design of Ornate Village sign and Visit Mr. Mould (the sign maker) on 20<sup>th</sup> November re design of Ornate Village sign (on page 3 of these minutes).

**b) Ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull Public House**

The Clerk said that she had visited Mr. Shaw at the Land Registry and he found the relevant maps. He said that the footpath adjacent to the Bull Public House and its garden are not registered to anyone. The Bull Public House and car park are registered in the name of the Bunch Pub Company who have a lease from the Allied Brewery Company (the owners of the land).

After discussion, it was agreed that in the first instance, a letter be sent to Allied Brewers to say that we understand that the land is in their ownership and because the footpath is in a bad state of repair we ask that

they please repair it as soon as possible before someone gets injured. If an early response is not forthcoming, the Parish Council to write to the Stevenage licensing authority to inform them of the situation and ask them what action can be taken

**Action: J. Allsop**

**c) Ownership of the access to the Parish Council land situated between 48 and 50 Rivershill**

Mr. Stock said that this item is still being investigated and would be discussed during the Parish Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> January.

**d) Public footpath sign at Glebe Court**

As reported under item 5 c, Action points outstanding for more than two months - Install dog-fouling-penalty signs on allotments (on page 5 of these minutes), the footpath sign has not yet been reinstated.

**e) Minerals Local Plan Review**

At the Parish Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, Mr. Poulton was asked to draft a response to the Minerals Local Plan Review for discussion during the meeting tonight.

Mr. Stock read out Mr. Poulton's draft response as follows.

'Watton at Stone Parish Council wishes to make the following comments on the Minerals Local plan.

The Council wishes to object in respect of Sites for Sand and Gravel Extraction and the Working of Preferred Areas on the grounds that the rolled forward plan timetable is too long into the future. There is no need or justification to identify so much new provision especially when provision can be met from the current specific sites and where you have resolved to grant planning permission, together with the first preferred site at BAE Hatfield. Therefore you unnecessarily identify the land adjoining Rickneys Quarry, near Hertford.

If this site were to be developed it would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance on this part of rural East Herts.

The environmental impact on this area in respect of noise, dust, traffic and damage to the landscape would be unacceptable to the quality of life for those people who live in or near the vicinity of this preferred site.'

After discussion, Mr. Stock proposed that the above response be sent to Ms. Susan Davidson (Head of County Development at HCC, County Hall, Hertford). Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## 7 Reports

### a) Sub-Committees

#### Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items concerning the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2002**

Mr. Knight proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by Mr. Filer as a true record. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and Mr. Filer was in favour. Mr. Filer signed the minutes.

- **Budget 2003/2004**

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of the draft budget figures for 2003/2004.

Mr. Filer said that he went through each item first with the Clerk and then with Mr. Poulton and compared the figures to those already spent this year. The process was then repeated at the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> October and alterations made where necessary.

Mr. Filer proposed that the following recommendations made by the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee be agreed.

- The Standing Order value for contracts [Standing Order number 73(a)] is raised from £1,000 to £3,000. This would cover all normal business done by the Parish Council.
- The Community Hall hire charges remain the same for next year.
- The Sports & Social Club hire charges rise from £1836 to £1900 (a rise of 3.5%).
- Allotment rent to rise from £7 to £10 per full allotment (half allotments to rise from £3.50 to £5).
- Christine Bewley's rate of pay to be increased from £5.25 to £5.50 per hour.
- Ted Brown's rate of pay to be increased from £5.25 to £5.50 per hour.

Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk left the meeting while the next two items were discussed.

- It was agreed that the Clerk's salary be increased to £6421 (this amount excludes National Insurance contributions payable by the Parish Council).

Mrs. McCash to confirm the NIC payable by the Parish Council so that the budget can be set and the precept agreed.

**Action: H. McCash**

Mr. Stock left the room while the following item was discussed.

Whilst delivering papers to Mr. Stock's house on behalf of the Parish Council, the Clerk's son fell onto a Peugeot car, pulling off one of the wing-mirrors and denting the side panel of the door. After the Parish Council meeting in October had finished, Parish Councillors discussed the incident (without the Clerk and Mr. Stock being present) and agreed that because it had occurred whilst carrying out Parish Council duties, the Clerk should not be liable to pay for the repairs. However, they would try and claim from Cornhill Insurance under the Public Liability section. Watton Service Station carried-out the repairs to the car at a cost of £123.70 including VAT.

After discussion at the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October (again without the Clerk and Mr. Stock being present) it was recommended that because of technical issues over liability, the Parish Council does not make a claim on its insurance policy.

The Parish Council agreed the recommendations of the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

Watton Service Station has been paid (by the Parish Council) for the repair.

Mr. Stock and the Clerk returned to the meeting.

Mr. Filer to check the public liability cover on the Parish Council and Community Hall insurance policies for all persons carrying out work on behalf of the Parish Council (this includes all Parish Councillors and the Clerk).

**Action: D. Filer**

Mr. Filer proposed that the following fund transfers be made in April 2003. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- £1,500 is transferred from the Parish Council 14-day account into the Community Hall 14-day account for resurfacing at the Playarea.
- £5,000 is transferred from the Parish Council 14-day account into the Community Hall 14-day account for the future resurfacing of the MPPA and as an emergency contingency for the Community Hall.

The Parish Council holds £2,500 of funds donated to them by the Watton-at-Stone Millennium Mayfair Committee for the purchase of an Ornate Village sign for the village

• **Precept 2003/2004**

The precept forms had been received from EHDC. This item to be placed on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2002 so that the precept can be set and EHDC notified accordingly.

**Agenda: 01/03**

• **Quotation for strimming and mowing work in 2003**

Mr. G. Hale, Mr. E. Brown and Mr. T. Clark were all asked to submit their quotations for the following strimming and mowing works

- Mow plot of land adjacent to Beane Cottage, Walkern Road.
- Strim footpath from Walkern Road to Oak tree to a width of approximately 2 metres.
- Strim footpath alongside River Beane from Walkern Road to Mill Lane to a width of approximately 2 metres.
- Strim around the two seats located on the Lammas field.
- Strim from top of George and Dragon car park down path adjacent to 80 High Street to High Street.
- Cut back hedge running from Bull public car park to back of Rivershill.
- Strim footpath from Community Hall, School Lane to Rectory Lane (both sides).
- Mow plot of land by Community Hall and dig and weed flowerbed.
- Strim along hedge the length of the playarea on Sportsfield site, especially under the three seats.
- Strim or mow Church Walk (both sides)
- Strim footpath behind the Chestnuts to a width of approximately 2 meters, both sides of the stile.
- Strim driveway alongside Glebe Court, both sides.

Work to commence:

- first week in April,

With five further works on:

- first week of May
- First week of June
- Second week of July
- Third week of August
- Second week of September.

To-date only one response has been received. Mr. Hale has quoted £864 to carryout the six blocks of work using the Parish Council equipment.

Mr. Brown has informed us that he is unable to quote for the work.

Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke said that they were both concerned about possible liability problems associated with a contractor using Parish Council equipment (i.e. strimmer and mower). Mr. Meischke and Mr. Filer to study the insurance.

**Action: J. Meischke/D. Filer**

After discussion, it was agreed to write to Mr. Graham Hale asking him to re-quote for the work using his own equipment. Also asking Mr. T. Clark, Mr. D. R. Monk, Mr. M. Stanley to quote on the same basis.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **EHDC grant for litterpicking**

Mr. Filer said that EHDC had agreed to grant us for four hours litterpicking per week. This will be back-paid to cover the six-month period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2002 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003. Mr. Filer said that Mr. Poulton was hopeful that a further grant would be received for the financial year 2003/04.

Mr. Poulton to be asked if the Parish Council should write to EHDC to apply for a grant in 2003/04.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Renewal of Annual membership for SLCC**

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council renew its annual membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks. Mr. Dunhill seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Community Hall Trustees.

- **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2002**

Mr. Stock proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed as a true record. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and Mr. Meischke was in favour.

Mr. Filer proposed that we now write and accept Mr. M. Taylor's quotation of £350 to decorate the large changing rooms and corridor in the new financial year (2003/04).

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Casual hiring of Community Hall facilities**

The Clerk said that she would like the Parish Council to clarify how much time she should add to hirings for setting-up and clearing-up before and after parties etc. Also, how much the minimum hire charge period is.

After discussion it was agreed that:

- the minimum hire period shall be one hour, and thereafter half-hour increments can be charged
- hirers shall be charged for setting-up and clearing-out times that they require (i.e. because the hall is not available for other hirers).

The Clerk said that she has been approached by a hirer who wants the Main Hall and Pavilion facilities for a three-hour reception following a christening. The hirer has asked if she can erect a bouncy castle in the Main Hall approximately three hours prior to the event, and wants to know if she will be charged because she will not be in the building.

After discussion it was agreed that if a facility is not available for use by another hirer who wants it, she should be charged from the time that she requires to put up the bouncy castle (as subsequently dismantle it). However, there will always be room for discretion concerning the period between setting something up and the using it later.

- **Community Hall Trustees**

It was agreed that Mr. Filer and Mr. Meischke study the insurance policy re the Trustees indemnity.

**Action: D. Filer/J. Meischke**

- **Opening and closing of external toilets at Community Hall**

Kate Harris has written to inform the Parish Council that she is no longer available to open and close the external toilets because she has started a new job and will not be in the village at the relevant times.

Mark Lewis (of the Beeches, School Lane), who attends Richard Hale School, has been appointed by Mr. Poulton to replace Ms. Harris.

Mr. Meischke said that he had visited the Community Hall each day this week and the toilets had not been closed by 4 pm or when he returned again at 4.30 pm. Mrs. Davies told Mr. Meischke that often the 'school bus' did not arrive in Watton-at-Stone until after 4.30 pm. The Clerk said that on Wednesday evenings Mark did not return to the village until after 5.30 pm because of after-school lessons.

Mr. Meischke said that this situation was not acceptable and that Mark should not have been appointed because he could not open and close the toilets at the times required. Also, because the toilets have not been closed on time, there has been a problem with regard to their cleanliness condition. Mr. Meischke suggested that because Mrs. V. Ansell (the Lolly-Pop-Lady) passes the Community Hall on her way to and from her duties, we could approach her and ask her if she is willing to do the job. Mr. Meischke to discuss the matter further with Mr. Poulton.

**Action: J. Meischke**

### Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **MPPA light**

Because of the recent wet weather, the sportsfield is too soft to allow a cherry-picker onto it so that the floodlight can be repaired.

- **Boiler & shower heads**

Mr. Meischke reported on this item under 5 b, Review of actions - Instruct Turners to carry-out work to hand-basins in the external toilets and the toilets adjacent to the changing rooms (on page 4 of these minutes).

- **RoSPA – Play area safety inspection**

Mr. Meischke said that we had received the safety-inspection-report on the playground equipment. However, he needs to clarify certain points before he discusses the report with the full Parish Council.

**Action: J. Meischke**

This item to be placed on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

**Agenda: 01/03**

- **Sportsfield**

Mr. & Mrs. Wilson, who live at Glebe House, recently had their hedge which backs onto the sportsfield cut back. The contractor who did the work used the sportsfield to gain access to the hedge. This was during the recent wet weather and as a result damage has been done to the surface of the sportsfield by a heavy vehicle being driven across it.

It was agreed to write to Mr. & Mrs. Wilson to inform them of this and ask them to provide us with the name of the contractor involved. Also to notify them that any vehicle access to the sportsfield requires prior written permission from the Parish Council.

**Action: J. Meischke**

### Environment

Mr. Stock reported on the following items concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Byelaws - Watton Green and the Lammas**

Mr. Stock said that the Secretary of State confirmed the byelaws for Watton Green and the Lammas on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, and they will come into force on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2002.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has asked that the Parish Council to forward two copies of the final printed version of the byelaws, together with a statement that "this is a true printed copy of the byelaw confirmed by the Secretary of State on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002" and signed by the proper officer of the council (i.e. the Clerk).

The Clerk to act accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Rabbits on Allotments**

Mr. Stock said that we had received four letters concerning rabbit problems on the allotments. He said he would put these letters on high-speed circulation.

**Action: D. Stock**

This item to remain on the agenda for discussion during our meeting in January 2003. **Agenda: 01/03**

- **Watton Green**

Mr. Stock said that he had been in contact with the Countryside Management Service and agreed a site meeting in the New Year. This will enable us to identify areas of specific work so that we can develop a plan-for-a-plan (i.e. one that we can use for the purpose of costing the project). He said that it may be beneficial to invite a contractor to this meeting.

- **Lammas**

Mr. Dunhill reported on issues concerning the Lammas under 5b, Review of actions - Investigate tree problem on the Lammas (on page 4 of these minutes)

**b) Sportsfield**

**i) Report**

Mrs. McCash carried-out the sportsfield report on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2002, the result of which is as follows.

- **Sportsfield:**
  - Condition of grass Very muddy.
  - Litter None.
  - Dog fouling All in good condition and no fouling.
  - Netball posts OK.
  - General Boot scraper by changing room in terrible condition.
- **Children’s Playground:**
  - Condition of surface Muddy.
  - Litter/Litter bin Good.
  - Large swings Good – one flipped over.
  - Small swings Good.
  - See-Saw Good.
  - Rainbow multi-play and slide Good.
  - Two spring sit-on Good.
  - Teen shelter Good – muddy.
  - General Good – some very muddy areas.
- **Bike ramps area:**
  - Junior Jump Good not used.
  - Double Ramp Good not used.
  - Fun Box Good not used.
- **Community Hall:**
  - General Condition (Exterior) Good – some mud thrown at top windows.
  - Litter bin Good – empty.
  - Car Park Very muddy.
  - General Good.
- **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**
  - Surface Clean and good.
  - Boundary Fencing Good.
  - Tennis nets Good.
  - Litter Good – none.
  - General Good.
- **Great Innings Play Area:**
  - Equipment Good.
  - Surfaces Good.
  - Litter None.
  - Dog fouling None.
  - Comments Sign broken needs putting up.
- **Allotments Area:**
  - Access Good.
  - Condition of paths between Allotments Good.
  - Condition of Allotments under cultivation Good.
  - Condition of Allotments not under cultivation Good.
  - Litter Good no sign of dog fouling.
  - Comments All good for time of year.
- **Culverts on Mill Lane**
  - Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts Some not too bad.
  - Dog-fouling Some.
  - Comments -
- **Salt bins**
  - Perrywood Lane Full.
  - Entrance to Great Innings Full.
  - Great Innings South – outside number 93 Full.
  - Station Road Full.
  - Moorymead Close Full.

- |                                                                                                                                                      |                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Hazeldell                                                                                                                                            | Full.                                    |
| • <b>Dog-waste bins</b>                                                                                                                              |                                          |
| Footpath 17                                                                                                                                          | OK.                                      |
| Sportsfield                                                                                                                                          | OK.                                      |
| Church Walk                                                                                                                                          | OK.                                      |
| Walkern Road                                                                                                                                         | OK.                                      |
| Station Road                                                                                                                                         | OK.                                      |
| High Street (by Memorial)                                                                                                                            | OK.                                      |
| Great Innings                                                                                                                                        | OK.                                      |
| Mill Lane                                                                                                                                            | OK.                                      |
| • <b>General Comments</b>                                                                                                                            | Parish info board – well used and clean. |
| • <b>Notice board at Great Innings</b>                                                                                                               |                                          |
| EHDC to be informed that the their notice board at the Great Innings Playarea needs reinstating.                                                     |                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Action: J. Allsop</b>                 |
| • <b>Playarea on sportsfield</b>                                                                                                                     |                                          |
| Mrs. McCash has received a request from a parent for a path to be laid to the playarea because they get their feet dirty walking on the sportsfield. |                                          |
| It was agreed not to pursue this matter at the present time.                                                                                         |                                          |
| ii) <b>Weekly report and action</b>                                                                                                                  |                                          |
| No new problems were identified during the weekly inspections.                                                                                       |                                          |

## 8 Planning

### a) Applications

#### i) Windrush, Whempstead

Erection of conservatory

Mr. Clark and Mr. Stock left the meeting while this item was discussed.

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Clark and Mr. Stock returned to the meeting.

#### ii) 2 Motts Close

Extension to lounge and provision of porch

At Mr. Stock's request, Mrs. Davies confirmed that the application for 2 Motts Close was identical to her recent extension at 1 Motts Close. Mr. Stock said that Mr. Poulton had visited the immediate neighbours and they had no objections.

Parish Councillors agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### b) Appeals

#### i) 119 High Street

Change of use from shop to food and drink (takeaway)

It was agreed by all present that we repeat our original objections to this application as follows:

‘The Parish Council strongly objects to the above application for the following reasons.

- Increase in traffic-movement in the area.
- Increase in parked cars in the area causing visibility problems for pedestrians and drivers.
- The new Post Office has already had an impact on traffic movements in this area.
- Increase of litter in the area.
- There is already a fast food (Chinese takeaway) in an adjacent building.
- The application is an over development of this type of activity.
- The Parish Council is concerned about the environmental impact an additional takeaway will have on the immediate residential area, especially with regards to noise and pollution.
- The Parish Council does not want to loose another retail outlet in the village.’

Mr. Stock read out a letter of objection already sent by Mr. Poulton as a District Councillor. After discussion Mr. Stock proposed that we repeat our original objection and also add that:

- the proposed takeaway will be situated in a dark and secluded courtyard
- statement 2.2 is incorrect because goods are still being sold from this site
- in the Parish Council's opinion this is a totally inappropriate place for a food and drink takeaway.

Mrs. Davies seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

**Action: D. Stock/J. Allsop**

**c) Decisions**

None.

**9 Correspondence received**

**a) 117-121 High Street – new illuminated fascia sign**

Mr. Stock said that because of concerns raised by Mrs. Davies, the Parish Council had written to the planning enforcement officer at EHDC informing them that the ownership of the Chinese takeaway has recently changed hands and the new owners had erected an illuminated sign which is not in keeping with the village scene. Because the shop lies within the conservation area of the village, EHDC were asked to inspect the sign and inform us if it is permissible.

EHDC wrote to us on the 28<sup>th</sup> November as follows.

I refer to your communication regarding the above site and confirm that the matter is receiving my attention.

The enforcement officer will investigate this as soon as possible and I shall write to your in due course regarding your enquiry.'

The item to be placed on the agenda under Specific Items until the matter is resolved.

**Agenda: 01/03**

**b) Correspondence relating to 68 Hazeldell and Station Road – land adjacent to boundary fence**

Mr. Stock said that Hertfordshire Highways had received a request from Mr. and Mrs. Chesterman, the owners of 68 Hazeldell, to plant the grass verge on the Station Road side of their boundary (west of the entrance to Watton Place Clinic). The Parish Council was copied with the related correspondence. Currently, the plot of land is maintained by Hertfordshire Highways but brambles along the boundary fence encroach into the garden of number 68 Hazeldell.

After much discussion, it was obvious that Parish Councillors were split on this subject. Some were happy with the idea of extra planting in principal, where as others were very concerned about it and therefore not in favour. This was because of fears about its long-term maintenance and upkeep, and its attraction to vandals and litterlouts etc. A number of alternative solutions were discussed. However, it was finally agreed that we write to Hertfordshire Highways (with a copy to Mr. and Mrs. Chesterman) to request that the local authority removes the brambles completely (including their roots) from the site and the grass continues to be cut as in the past.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**c) East of England Development Agency re Broadband Internet access for communities**

Mr. Stock said that because of the size of this item it is to be put on circulation.

**Action: D. Stock**

**d) Naming of hall at University of Hertfordshire – Watton House**

The University of Hertfordshire has written (letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> November) to inform us that its new 'de Havilland Campus' is due to be opened in September 2003 on 30 acres of the former British Aerospace site at Hatfield. The new campus, at a cost in the region of £120M, is the largest campus developed in England for the last 50 years. In addition to academic facilities, it will include a 500-seat Auditorium, a large Sports Centre and Swimming Pool and 'en-suite' facilities in 1600 bedroom units. These 11 Halls will be named after Hertfordshire villages, one of which, if acceptable to the Parish Council, they would like to call Watton Hall.

The Parish Council has written to say that it is delighted to accept this proposal from the University of Hertfordshire.

Mr. Stock thanked Mr. Filer for his significant involvement in this subject and said that the Parish Council very much appreciated his efforts.

**e) EHDC – High Street flowerbed backing onto Willowdene**

Mr. Stock read out the following letter (dated 13<sup>th</sup> November) from Elizabeth Greenwood (Landscape Officer at EHDC).

'Thank you for your letter of 27 September 2002.

I have visited this site with a contractor and will be arranging to plant three trees including Birch, and two bird Cherry trees along this planting bed together with 10 shrubs which will include Viburnun Tinis and Lilac (Syringa Vulgaris) which will provide a better screen along the High Street from Willowdene.

I will inform you of the date of planting but would suggest that I ask Simon Thake of Much Hadham Landscapes who will be carrying out this work to maintain the trees for the first year to ensure satisfactory establishment, I propose to plant them in selected standard size approximately 4 metres high, which will provide a better screen. If this is acceptable I will keep you informed of progress of this planting.

I have not heard anything from CBS Estates who manage Willowdene regarding planting of this hedge and regret that the District Council have jurisdiction in this matter.'

Mr. Knight and the Clerk said that the planting had already been done.

**f) EHDC - Crime and Disorder training opportunity**

Pauline Entecott (EH Community Safety Partnership) has invited the Parish Council to take part in one of several workshops on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. This will help Town and Parish Councillors to understand their statutory duty under the act and know how they can ensure that they comply. These workshops will take place early in 2003.

Mr. Filer agreed to attend one of the workshops together with the Clerk. **Action: D. Filer/J. Allsop**

**g) NSPCC – request for financial support**

The NSPCC has written asking for a financial contribution towards running their local services. Mr. Stock reminded Parish Councillors that it is not our policy to send donations to charities. However, Parish Councillors could make personal contributions if they so wished.

It was agreed to write to the NSPCC informing them of the Parish Council's policy. **Action: J. Allsop**

**h) Environment Agency – Flood event data gathering: Parish Council involvement**

The Environment Agency has written to thank us for our letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> November concerning information regarding flooding in our area.

**i) EHDC – Sale of agricultural land in small plots within the district**

Mr. Stock gave a brief outline of this item and then said that it is to be put on circulation. **Action: J. Allsop**

**10 Reports from other Organisations**

- **Watton-at-Stone School Conservation Society**

Mr. Stock reported on the following items concerning the Conservation Society.

- **Public meeting - Watton Station**

The Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society and the Parish Council have arranged a Public Meeting to discuss, with WAGN representatives, problems associated with our railway station. The meeting will be held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2003, starting at 8 pm, in the Community Hall. Agenda items will include station maintenance, information systems, security and vandalism and quality/reliability of our train service.

Mr. Stock said that it would be good for our cause if as many Parish Councillors as possible could attend the meeting.

- **Updating the Village Guide**

Versions of the Millennium Village Guide should be on sale in the village from the end of this week.

- **Way-marking of the Millennium Walk**

Mr. Stock and Mr. Dunhill will be installing the recently-purchased way-markers on the Millennium Walk very soon.

- **Watton-at-Stone Primary School**

Mr. Clark said that the school had received a very encouraging OFSTED report. The report has given them the status of a Good-Achieving-School and they only just fell short of receiving an Excellent Standard because of a couple of minor points.

This is a significant improvement from the inspection held two years ago and the Head Teacher and Staff are to be warmly congratulated.

- **Perrywood Lane**

Mr. Filer said that Perrywood lane is in a very muddy condition due to a metalised road being installed on land at the Crowbury. Not only is the surface dirty, but it is also a driving hazard. He said that he had informed Mr. Poulton (as a District Councillor) of the situation. Mr. Poulton has e-mailed the Highways Authority asking them to take the necessary action.

## 11 Items for Parish News

Articles on the following items discussed by the Parish Council to be sent to the editor of the Parish News for inclusion in next issue.

- University of Hertfordshire
- Public meeting about railway station
- Minerals Local Plan

Mr. Filer to write the articles accordingly.

**Action: D. Filer**

## 12 Accounts/Correspondence

### Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

#### Petty Cash

#### Receipts

None

#### Payments

None

#### Cheques required

D. R. Monk	Leaf clearance	100.00
D. R. Monk	Leaf clearance	50.00
Ted Brown	20 hours	105.00
J. Allsop	December salary	491.82
Ted Brown	Xmas bonus	50.00
J. Allsop	Xmas bonus	<u>100.00</u>
		<u>896.82</u>

#### Cheques received

None.

### Watton-at-Stone Community

#### Hall

#### Petty Cash

#### Receipts

Mr. Keen – Main Hall	60.00	Mark Lewis – 2 weeks work	10.00
Barry Moor – Main Hall	24.00	VAT return 10/02	143.27
John Murphy	6.00	Drinks & biscuits for Police meet	<u>3.31</u>
Floodlighting to 11/09/02	<u>72.00</u>		<u>156.58</u>
	<u>162.00</u>		

#### Cheques required

David Bunyan	Repair to tiles	149.52
David Bunyan	Tree surgery to Oak tree	500.35
Cornhill Insurance	Additional premium	92.06
HCC	Cleaning materials	45.53
Kate Harris	4 weeks	20.00
M D Electrical	Repair fire alarm	231.24
Christine Bewley	55 hours cleaning	288.75
Christine Bewley	Xmas bonus	50.00
		<u>1377.45</u>

#### Cheques received

Georgie Pay	Main Hall hire	100.80
Mrs. Bradford	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	26.00
Mrs. Stevens	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	64.00
Conservative Association	Pavilion hire	28.00
Mrs. E. Fuller	Pavilion hire	20.00
Mrs. Gilbey	Main Hall hire	75.00
Mr. & Mrs. Cobb	Pavilion hire	7.00
Mr. Margot	Pavilion hire	17.50
Herts Police Authority	Pavilion hire	<u>31.31</u>
		<u>369.61</u>

Mr. Knight proposed that accounts be paid, Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- **The meeting closed at 10.10 pm.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2003.**