

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 17th July 2012

Present: Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman) Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs. Christine Dinnin Mr. Denis Filer
Mr. Ian Knight Mrs. Helen McCash (until 1948)
Mr. Nigel Poulton Mr. David Stock
Ms. Emma Waltham The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

Police: PC Andy Woodward (until 1948)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mr. Iain Harris.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Report on policing matters from PC Andy Woodward

Mr. Smith welcomed PC Andy Woodward to the meeting

PC Andy Woodward presented the crime statics for the following periods.

- 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012: 66 crimes with 23 detections
The detection rate is approximately the same as the whole of Hertfordshire at about 34%.

- 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011: 75 crimes with 18 detections

The most notable recent crimes are two burglaries. An iPad and two iPhone were stolen from a property in the High Street. There was an attempted burglary in Rivershill. However, they failed to force a side door to gain entry to the property.

Two young men attending the Sound Flow Festival at Frogmore Hill were set on by another group when they tried to catch the last train from Watton-at-Stone station. A rucksack and hat were stolen. The injured party was not from the village and it is likely that the thugs were also not from Watton-at-Stone

A woman visiting the War Memorial had her bag containing her mobile phone taken. A suspect has been apprehended tonight and they will be charged in court tomorrow morning

Burglaries are currently on the decline however, thieves have now moved on to steeling scrap metal because the police put less effort into detection.

PC Andy Woodward organised for Mr. Smith and Mr. Poulton to meet with the newly appointed Chief Inspector McDonald on 11th July.

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the polices concerns that the new housing estate could see crime levels rise in the village, particularly offences such as burglary. With this in view Chief Inspector McDonald has suggested setting up an ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) camera/s around Watton-at-Stone. This would enable the police to have a way of tracking criminals entering and leaving the village at the time when offences occur. A flashing speed version is available, but this is an expensive option. Mr. Poulton said that funding might be available via our County Councillor, Bryan Hammond. Mr. Poulton said he had arranged for Chief Inspector McDonald to come and talk to councils at the Inter Parish Conference in September.

Vandalism at the Community Hall was also discussed at the meeting and Chief Inspector McDonald would like to install cameras in problem areas around the village, including the Community Hall, during the summer holidays. The cameras look like a flashlight and would store data that could then be downloaded by the police, as and when required. The cameras would be installed for use over the summer holidays and would be available for the Parish Council to purchase as the end of this period at a cost of approximately £97 each.

Chief Inspector McDonald was also keen to install memo cameras in properties of the elderly who have been subjected to distraction burglaries. A notice would then be placed in the Parish News saying that cameras have been installed but not saying where or how many.

PC Andy Woodward and Mrs. McCash left the meeting at 1948.

6 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 19th June 2012**
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

b) Review of actions

None

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

None

d) Action points resolved

1. Meet Tim Clark on site on the Parish Council land at Rivershill
2. E-mail East Herts Council re planning application for 7 Rivershill
3. Provide the names of all people involved in the Jubilee Celebrations
4. Write to all the people involved in the Jubilee Celebrations
5. Distribute remaining Jubilee mugs as agreed
6. Read, and if required, comment on notes of East Herts Local Plan & Neighbourhood Plan
7. Write to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Beane Cottage re Parish Council land
Mr. Smith read out Mr. and Mrs. Taylor's response. A copy of this letter to be e-mailed to all Parish Councillors. **Action: J. Allsop**
8. Obtain authorisation for all payments under £250
9. Give signed copy of Community Hall audited accounts to McCash and Hay
10. Prepare 2012/13 Asset registers showing purchase prices excluding VAT
11. Purchase replacement emergency fire exit light for Sports Hall
12. Arrange for the bench adjacent to the sportsfield Oak tree to be removed
13. Liaise over re-sighting of bench on sportsfield overlooking the MPPA
14. Write to Michele Hart about the removal and relocation of the bench
15. Give Clerk the address of the properties whose shrubbery is blocking the allotments
16. Write to the High Street properties re plant growth overhanging the allotment entrance
17. Write to Circle Anglia re plant growth overhanging allotment entrance
18. Ask Adam Welch to trim the Allotment path
19. Arrange for white lining on the MPPA to be repainted when appropriate
20. Ask Adam Welch to tidy the War Memorial Garden
21. Write to East Herts Council re activities for the elderly
22. Write to East Herts Council re adopting the New Code of Conduct
23. Amend Standing Orders re code of conduct

7 Planning

a) Applications

i) 14 High Street (3/12/0761/FP)

Vehicle access over path

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock as follows.

'I have reviewed this application under our planning protocol.

The proposal is for "vehicle access." It appears that the applicant wants the kerb dropped. I am not clear how this is to work given that the applicant has no rights over the kerb which is part of the highway.

That said for my part I see no problem with the application in planning terms, albeit that it is flawed and will go nowhere.

May I propose that the Parish Council agrees to make no comment other than to record its doubt as to whether this is a proper matter for a planning application. '

Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke agreed with Mr. Harris's proposal and the Clerk wrote to East Herts Council accordingly.

b) Decisions

None.

8 Specific items**a) Adopt revised Standing Orders**

Mr. Smith said that at the June Parish Council meeting, the Parish Council adopted a new Code of Conduct as from 1st July 2012. This required an amendment to page 10, item 7 b of the Parish Council Standing orders 2012 as follows.

‘The Localism Act 2011 requires that The Parish Council now adopts a code of conduct whereby there is a general duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct at all times. The compulsory disclosure of interests is summarised in 7(c) below.

The code will be known as ‘The Watton at Stone Parish Council Code of Conduct, a copy of which will be given to all elected and co-opted members.’

The Parish Council agreed to accept the revised Standing Orders.

Mr. Smith gave all Parish Councillors present a new Standing Orders sheet of pages 9 and 10 (which are printed back to back) and asked them to substitute this new page for the one in their current Standing Orders folder.

Mr. Filer said the Parish Council does not have a fixed set of financial regulations. However, Standing Orders 17 a states.

‘Any payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the Council’s financial regulations, which shall be reviewed at least annually.’

The Clerk to obtain a copy of the financial regulations used by other Parish Councils. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Filer to adapt the financial regulations for use by the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.

Action: D. Filer

This item to be placed on the October 2012 agenda.

Agenda: 10/12

b) Strimming work on Parish Council land at Rivershill

Mr. Smith, Mr. Poulton, Mr. Meischke, Mrs. Dinnin and the Clerk made a site visit of the Parish Council land at Rivershill on Tuesday 10th July.

Tim Clark has done an excellent job of the annual clearance work. However, on visiting the site, it was noted that the owners of 48 Rivershill are dumping their garden waste near the entrance of this Parish Council land.

It was agreed to write to the owners of 48 Rivershill asking them to remove their rubbish because it is blocking access to the site and requesting that they remove or reinstate the fence panel that has fallen across the access.

Action: M. Smith

A large tree has fallen from adjoining land bringing down two smaller trees.

The Parish Council land at Rivershill was discussed, including the access rights and the ownership of the adjoining land. It was agreed to find out who owns the adjoining land.

Action: J. Allsop

This item to be placed on the September agenda.

Agenda: 09/2012

c) Employee Performance Review

This item was put on the agenda in error.

d) Parish Council response to land identified by East Herts Council in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment

Mr. Smith said that the Parish Council had today received a letter from Aston Parish Council enclosing their response to the possible development of land along the A602 between Stevenage and Watton-at-Stone.

Mr. Poulton said he would be attending the East Herts Council, Local Development Scheme meeting on 26th July and will report back to Parish Councillors.

Agenda: 09/2012

e) Memorial benches in the village

It was agreed to replace the Bob Ansell memorial bench, situated outside Beane Cottage on the Walkern Road, with a new one made from recycled plastic material.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

Mark Blacktin to be asked to quote for removing the existing bench and installing the new one.

Action: N. Poulton

Mr. Smith said that the Watton Ramblers would like to install a stone memorial bench in the Jubilee garden on the Lammas, in memory of Mr. Everett. Parish Councillors had no objection to this request.

Mr. Smith to notify the Watton Ramblers accordingly.

Action: M. Smith

f) Lights in Watton at Stone to be changed to part night lighting

Mr. Poulton said that Hertfordshire County Council are arranging for all their streetlights to be switched-off from mid-night until 0600. The sensors on the streetlights will be modified over the next two months.

Parish Council owned streetlights will not be modified and therefore will remain on during the night.

Note: The Parish Council own streetlights in Beane Road, Glebe Close, Hockerill, Rectory Lane, Rivershill and School Lane.

g) Meeting with CI McDonald on 11th July

Refer to item 8 g, Report on policing matters from PC Andy Woodward.

h) Awarding of Parish Council Trophies at the Community Service held on 1st July 2012

Mr. Smith presented the Parish Council trophies during the Community Service on Sunday 1st July, as follows.

- The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Good Citizenship Award was presented to Ben Ellis
- The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Outstanding Effort Award was presented to Ben Gardiner.

Keep-sake trophies were presented to the children with the awards.

Mr. Smith also presented the two Scout and Guide Trophies at the Community Service.

9 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash – Receipts			Petty cash - Payments
None			None
 Cheques issued			
Wages, salaries & allowances	July 2012		1343.73
J. Allsop	Concord Trophies		55.23
St. Albans Diocesan Board	Allotments rent		300.00
St John Ambulance	First Aid provision at the Jubilee picnic on 3rd June		122.40
Harry's Band	entertainment for Jubilee Celebrations		160.00
J. Allsop	Printerinks – remanufactured toner cartridge for printer		29.95
Adam Welch	1/2 of £2700 for annual Watton maintenance schedule		1280.00
Frank Cooper & Son Limited	Grass cutting on 31st May, 15th, 20th, 29th June 2012		244.80
Mr. N. Turner	equipment hired for Jubilee musical entertainment		76.00
Tim Clark	clearance work on Parish Council land at Rivershill		85.00
			<u>3697.11</u>
 Cheques received			
None			
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts			Petty Cash -Payments
Sharon Ling – Pavilion	48.00	None	
Jim Keen – Main Hall	130.00		
Nigel Poulton – Pavilion	7.00		
Anna-Maria Mansfield – Main Hall	39.00		
Andrea Gill – Pavilion	<u>40.00</u>		
	<u>264.00</u>		
 Cheques issued			
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials		69.36
HMRC	VAT payment		108.17
East Herts Council	Rates		119.00
McCash and Hay	Annual audit		126.00
Herts Fire Protection	Annual fire inspection and equipment		174.66
Wages	July 2012		458.20
Veolia	Water		43.13
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials		72.47
	<u>1170.99</u>		<u>1170.99</u>

Cheques received

Watton School	For Dots and Tots - Pavilion hire	98.00
Mrs. Hunt	Main Hall	30.00
Watton School	Main Hall and Pavilion	1,225.35
HMRC	VAT rebate	30.14
Badminton Club	Main Hall	121.50
		<u>1,504.99</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **Quarterly accounts - Parish Council and Community Hall**

Mr. Filer went through the first quarter's income and expenditure items for the Parish Council and the Community Hall accounts. He explained that the first-quarter accounts are not a good reflection of 25% of the year's income and expenditure. For example, the Precept is paid twice a year, representing 50% of the total income and seasonal expenditure items such as grass cutting do not occur during the winter months.

To date, no street lighting invoices have been received from Hertfordshire County Council. East Herts Council will invoice the Parish Council for the emptying of the dog waste bins in early 2013.

The Community Hall's Main Hall and Pavilion hiring income will be considerably lower in the 2nd quarter due to fewer lettings during the summer holidays.

Mr. Filer said that the entertainment and St. John Ambulance invoices for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations on 3rd June were paid out of the £3,000 grant received from Barrett homes in the financial year 2011/12.

• **Report on 1st Quarterly inspection of Parish Council and Community Hall accounts**

Mrs. McCash will do the first quarterly inspection of the accounts in early August. **Action: H. McCash**

• **Opening of new Community Hall bank account for play area fundraising funds**

Parish Councillors approved the opening of a new Santander bank account. The new account to be named Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Play Area Fund. The Clerk to act accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

• **BDO – notice conclusion of audit**

Mr. Filer reported that we had received 'a clean bill of health' from BDO LLP who had carried out the annual statutory approval of the Parish Council accounts.

The Parish Council are now required to display a notice of conclusion of audit on the Parish Council notice board for a period of two weeks. **Action: J. Allsop**

Parish Councillors approved BDO LLP's report on the audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012.

• **Asset registers**

All Parish Councillors present were given a copy of the updated Asset registers. These show the original net value of the individual asset where known.

He asked Parish Councillors to study the Asset registers and notify him if any items are missing or have changed. **Action: Parish Councillors**

• **Authorisation of invoices**

This item has already been resolved.

Community Hall Trustees

• **Report and minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 10th July**

• **Loft ladder**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke have inspected the loft ladder and a new catch is being purchased to make the ladder safe again. **Action: J. Meischke**

• **Bench seat under oak tree on sportsfield**

Mark Blacktin has quoted £180 to remove the bench seat from under the oak tree and relocate it away from the canopy of the Oak tree.

It was agreed to accept Mark Blacktin's quotation. **Action: N. Poulton**

• **Painting floor in unisex toilet**

This work is due to be carried out before the end of July.

• **Decoration**

Bob Adams is due to paint the kitchen on 19th and 20th July.

The scheduled exterior painting of the Community Hall will take place when there is a dry spell of weather.

• **Annual electrical inspection**

D P Electrics will carry out the annual electrical inspection whilst they are on site replacing the emergency light and fitting guards over them to protect the lights from being damaged by missiles (namely: balls). Mr. Poulton said that the Watton Youth Drop Inn have agreed to pay for the fitting of the guards on emergency lights.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **MPPA**

The small damage to the MPPA surface has not been repaired due to the very wet weather conditions.

Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Bench seat under oak tree on sportsfield**

This item was discussed under Community Hall Trustees - Report and minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 10th July.

- **Great Innings play area – gates**

The two gates, have been installed at the Great Innings play area. The new gates, which are bright yellow, are outward opening to prevent dogs entering the site.

- **River Beane - Mr. Knight's report on responsible river bank management**

Mr. Knight said that the River Beane Restoration Association want to promote the control of invasive weeds along the riverbanks of the River Beane by the riparian owners. The most invasive weeds requiring control include the Himalayan Balsam, the Giant Hogweed and the Japanese Knot Weed.

He asked that the Parish Council take a stance, by doing its best to control these invasive weeds along the riverbank on the Lammas. The weeds need clearing annually to ensure the plants do not have the opportunity to flower and then produce more seeds. Seeds from the upper reach of the River Beane and the Stevenage Brook have washed down stream to Watton-at-Stone, where they germinate.

Mr. Smith said that Bluebury Contractors do carryout weed killing along the riverbank every year when they are on site during the annual grass cutting works.

It was agreed to ask Adam Welch to quote for clearing the weeds annually before the plants flower.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Glaxo volunteers**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Glaxo would not be providing volunteer labour in the village this year.

- **Tree on land at Rivershill**

Refer to item 8 a Community Hall - Report and minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 10th July.

- **Allotment hedges**

Mr. Dinnin said that Glebe Court, 122, 124 and 132 have all cut back their hedges. However, 132 High Street have only taken a minimal amount off their hedge. Mrs. Dinnin to monitor the situation to see if further hedge cutting work is required.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **General maintenance in the Village**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Adam Welch has done an excellent job of the scheduled works he does around the village.

Mr. Smith said that the nettles along the sportsfield side of the hedge along School Lane need cutting back. The Clerk said that this work forms part of the scheduled work done by Adam Welch.

Mrs. Dinnin to ask Adam Welch to cut back the nettles as soon as possible.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Grass cutting on the Lammas and Watton Green**

Mr. Smith said that the Lammas grass cutting had been done. However, because of the very wet weather, only the Watton Green ditch has been strimmed. The grass will be cut when the ground is dry enough to allow heavy machinery on the land without damaging it.

b) Routine reports

- i) **Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests on Sunday 15th July.

- ii) **Monthly village-report**

Mrs. McCash completed the report on 17th July.

Mr. Smith said that there were no adverse items highlighted in the July monthly village-report.

- iii) **Weekly sportsfieldhave -report and action**

Mr. Poulton said that Ted Brown has been instructed to weed kill around the sportsfield and Community Hall areas.

- v) **Website**

The Clerk to upload the new Code of Conduct to the website.

Action: J. Allsop

- v) **Website diary**

None.

10 Correspondence received

a) East Herts Rural Parish Conference – Friday 14th September

The East Herts Rural Parish Conference will be held on Friday 14th September 2012 at Much Hadham Village Hall. Mr. Poulton said he would be attending the conference.

b) East Herts Council Annual playground inspection

Ian Sharratt (Environmental Manager – Parks and Open Spaces) wrote on the 18th June advising us that the annual playground inspections in East Herts are due to take place in the final two weeks in July. The inspection includes an equipment risk assessment and a printed report.

The Clerk has e-mailed East Herts Council asking them to carry-out the annual playground inspection.

11 Village organisations

- **Wotton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Scout & Guide Group:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton Youth Drop Inn**

The Wotton Youth Drop Inn is closed during the summer school holidays. Their last session before the break was held on 11th July and sessions will resume on 5th September.

Four new volunteers have put their names forward, however existing volunteer numbers may drop off because of the new recruitments.

- **River Beane Restoration Association**

All Parish Councillors were forwarded the following e-mail from Ian Knight.

‘The River Beane Restoration Association (RBRA) recently received 2 letters from Oliver Heald MP, forwarding correspondence he had received from Richard Benyon – MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, and also one from Julia Simpson, NE Thames Area Manager of the Environment Agency about the River Beane issues the RBRA is pursuing.

These letters confirmed that a 50% reduction in abstraction from the Whitehall Pump Station located on the upper River Beane at Aston, is being planned to be implemented in the period from 2015 to 2020 provided satisfactory financial agreement can be reached with Veolia Central. They also advised that they are considering a complete shutdown of the Whitehall Pump Station. They expect to announce the decision in autumn 2012. This option would cost considerably more than a 50% reduction and they are doing the sums to see if it can be afforded.

We would obviously prefer a complete shutdown, but probably not at the expense of having to wait years more.

I have attached a copy of the reply to Oliver Heald, written by Dave Stimpsons (RBRA Chairman). It was also copied to Stephen McPartland.

Hope this email is of interest and it shows that Oliver Heald is continuing to press the case for action on the River Beane low flow issue.’

- **Wotton-at-Stone War Memorial hall**

Mr. Stock said that the next meeting of the War Memorial Hall Management Committee is scheduled for Friday 20th July.

- **Wotton-at-Stone School Governors:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Watch:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Sports & Social Club:** Nothing to report.

They have done an excellent job of clearing out the external cupboard.

- **Police Authority:** Nothing to report.

12 Items for Parish News

The following item was identified for inclusion in the September 2012 issue of the Parish News.

- Awarding of the Parish Council Trophies.

Action: J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2158.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 18th September 2012.**