

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 18th September 2012

Present: Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman) Mr. Ian Knight
Mrs. Helen McCash Mr. David Stock
Ms. Emma Waltham
The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

Members of public: Karen Kus (until 1930)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman), Mr. Nigel Poulton, Mrs. Christine Dinnin, Mr. Denis Filer and Mr. Iain Harris.

For the record, Mr. Meischke reported that Mr. Poulton is currently ill in hospital in Belgium.

2 Public Participation

Karen Kus, Whempstead said she was attending the Parish Council meeting on behalf of her neighbour, Jill Andreanoff, concerning item 9 a (correspondence received - E-mail from Jill Andreanoff re speeding issues in Whempstead Road).

Jill Andreanoff e-mailed on 29th August as follows.

'I was given your contact details by Councillor Hammond as being a possible link to obtain funding for the work to be carried out to control the speeding issues in Whempstead Road. You may be aware that Paul Patmore produced a report earlier this year following the petition and recommended the following measures (and associated costs).

- Improved signing and road markings = £5,000 (including design fee and works cost).
- Gateways = £10,000 to £15,000 (including design fee and works cost). Simplified features, such as a new entry sign and a 'SLOW' road marking at each end of Whempstead Road = £3,000.
- Reduction in speed limit to 40mph = £8,000 to £12,000, (including design fee, works cost and Traffic Regulation Order costs).

I have contacted the residents in order to clarify whether they would be prepared to contribute to these costs although as Whempstead is such a small Hamlet and has few residents I don't think that feasibly any contributions made would not amount to a significant sum and certainly wouldn't cover everything that has been recommended.

As I pointed out to Councillor Hammond when I met him earlier this year the scale of the problem is not apparent to anyone that doesn't live here to witness the regular unreported accidents which are not particularly minor. As you will see from the attached photo, taken outside my property, this car all but knocked over the telegraph pole in the early hours of the morning but the car was removed very soon after the same day before the police had arrived to investigate (not that they were particularly interested). Presumably the driver wished to remain anonymous (the reason for her hasty departure and car removal) perhaps because she had been drinking or was aware of the outrageous speed she had been travelling in order to mount two grass verges and knock over the pole. As nobody had been reported as hurt there was no further investigation carried out despite the fact that I had photographic evidence of the damage (not to mention the remnants of the car strewn all over my driveway). All the airbags had activated and the car was a complete write off.

Could we perhaps arrange to meet to discuss the possibility of getting this work carried out before someone is injured or killed - a real possibility with all the cyclist and walkers that visit the area on a regular basis?

It has been some time now since I presented the petition at the Joint Highways meeting and I would really appreciate any help that you could offer.'

Mr. Meischke said that the Parish Council sympathise with Whempstead's speeding problems and Watton-at-Stone also has its own speeding problems and have for many years been trying to get traffic-calming at the north-end of the High Street and in Station Road.

After discussion, Karen Kus was asked if Jill Andreanoff could provide the Parish Council with the full report for their consideration.

I was agreed that this item should be discussed at the October Parish Council meeting.

Agenda: 10/12

Karen Kus left the meeting.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

The Clerk said that Bryan Hammond had e-mailed on 11th September to inform the Parish Council that he is retiring as a County Councillor from May 2013. He has been a County Councillor for this area for 15 years.

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 17th July 2012**
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

b) Review of actions

1. Adapt financial regulations for use by the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Mr. Filer is adapting the financial regulations for use by the Parish Council.

Action: D. Filer

This item to be discussed at the October Parish Council meeting under Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

Agenda: 10/12

2. Find out who owns the land adjoining the Parish Council land at Rivershill

Mr. Smith and the Clerk have been on the Land Registry site to try to find out who owns the land adjoining the Parish Council land at Rivershill. So far, they have been unable to find out who owns the land. This item to be placed on the October Parish Council agenda.

Agenda: 10/12

3. Open new bank account

The Clerk said that she had contacted Santander about the opening of a new bank account and was waiting for the appropriate forms to be e-mailed to her.

4. Obtain quotation from Adam Welch for clearing invasive weeds on the Lammas riverbank

Mrs. Dinnin was not present at the meeting to update the Parish Council.

Action: C. Dinnin

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

None

d) Action points resolved

1. E-mail Parish Councillors a copy of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor's letter
2. Do the first quarterly inspection of the accounts in early August
3. Obtain a copy of the financial regulations used by other Parish Councils
4. Write to the owners of 48 Rivershill re rubbish on Parish Council land
5. Purchase a new bench to replace existing seat at Walkern Road
6. Inform the Watton Ramblers that the Parish Council give permission for installation of stone bench
7. Display completion of audit notice
8. Study the Asset registers and notify Mr. Filer of any changes required
9. Purchase and fit new catch for loft ladder
10. Accept Mark Blacktin's quotation to move bench under oak tree to a new location
11. Monitor hedge growth on the allotment to see if further hedge cutting work is required
12. Instruct Adam Welch to cut back the nettles along the School Lane
13. Upload the new Code of Conduct to the Watton-at-Stone website
14. Write Parish News article

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) Land adjacent to 99 High Street, Watton-at-Stone, Herts SG14 3SZ (3/12/1140/FP)

New dwelling with part formed of conversion of existing stable with existing attached garage and parking. In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed his findings to all Parish Councillors. Following approval from Parish Councillors, the Clerk was instructed to e-mail East Herts Council as follows.

'The Parish Council would like a decision on the above application to be made by a full Planning Committee meeting and not delegated to an officer for a decision. They have asked their District Councillor, Nigel Poulton, to help ensure that this happens.

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

- The proposal, on this restricted site, would result in a cramped form of development out of scale and character with the surrounding area with little amenity land. It would consequently be obtrusive and detrimental to the street scene and overbearing for occupiers of adjacent properties.
- The proposed development is in the Conservation area and is not in keeping with the surrounding houses in White House Close.
- The height of the proposed development exceeds those in the adjacent area and would be out of keeping.'

ii) 89-95, Station Road, Watton At Stone, Herts SG14 3SH (3/12/1244/AD)

8 no. banner signs, 1 no. flat pole and 1 no.1 stacked sign board

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed his findings to all Parish Councillors. Following approval from Parish Councillors, the Clerk was instructed to e-mail East Herts Council as follows.

'The Parish Council has no comment on this application.'

iii) 17 Moorymead Close, Watton At Stone, Herts SG14 3HF (3/12/1377/AD)

Conversion of integral garage to additional living accommodation

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed his findings to all Parish Councillors. Following approval from Parish Councillors, the Clerk was instructed to e-mail East Herts Council as follows.

'The Parish Council objects to this planning application on the following ground:

1. If granted it will result in the reduction of available off street parking and will consequently lead to an increase in on street parking.
2. On street parking has already increased dramatically within the village and continues to do so. This and other conversions of garages to living space will further exacerbate the situation.
3. There is already a serious shortage of parking space in Moorymead Close, exacerbated by users of the station parking there. This has been subject of extensive complaints by residents to Hertfordshire Highways which has recently agreed to put down yellow lines.'

During e-mail discussions between Parish Councillors, Mr. Smith had asked if all garage conversions should be treated in the same manner and did the Parish Council need to revise its current policy.

As the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, Mr. Stock reminded the meeting that the reasons which resulted in our policy of objecting to all garage conversions (e.g. the visual impact on the street scene, the increase in the on-going problems of on-street parking, etc). This had been discussed at length and agreed by the Parish Council some time ago, and he could not see any reason for changing this now. He also said that he felt the recent exchange of e-mails on the topic appeared to support this view.

The subject was again discussed fully taking into account the current situation and our past experiences. It was then agreed by all present that our existing policy should be retained and that all objections shall include indications of any related problems already experienced as the result of garage conversions or specific to the area involved.

Because this is a Policy issue, Mr. Stock suggested that the item be put on the agenda for our October meeting to allow Parish Councillors not present at today's meeting to comment. This was agreed.

Agenda: 10/12

It was also suggested, that the East Herts Council planning department could be invited to one of our meetings to explain its view on garage conversions and the problems they can cause.

b) Decisions

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

Vehicle access over path

-East Herts Council permission granted

ii) 7 Rivershill (3/12/0887/FP)

Single storey front extension and the enlargement of front dormer window

-East Herts Council permission granted

7 Specific items

a) Request for a litter bin by the memorial seat for the Beadle family

Mr. Poulton received a request for a litterbin to be installed by the Beadle family's memorial seat.

Mrs. McCash said she believed that this is a fly-tipping problem and that the rubbish is being blown into the area of the memorial seat rather than litter being dropped.

Mr. Meischke agreed to inspect the site on a regular basis and report back to the Parish Council at its October meeting

Action: J. Meischke

Agenda: 10/12

b) Replacement planting for the War Memorial Garden

Mr. Stock reminded Parish Councillors that we had agreed for additional planting at the rear of the site to maintain the balance of the War Memorial garden. To retain his original design-objectives he suggested that the time was near to plant some low-growing evergreen shrubs.

It was agreed that he liaise with Mrs. Dinnin and that Adam Welch could be contacted for advice and assistance.

Action: D. Stock/C. Dinnin

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

In the absence of Mr. Filer, Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
None		None
Cheques issued		
Ted Brown	24 hours litterpick x £7.90	189.60
Ted Brown	Strimming, mowing and weed killing	70.00
BDO LLP	Annual Audit fee	342.00
East Herts Council	to supply and fit two gates on Great Innings Play area	2,244.00
I. Blacktin	relocate memorial bench on sportsfield	180.00
Frank Cooper & Son Limited	Grass cutting on sportsfield 31st May, 15th, 20th, 29th June 2012	244.80
I. Blacktin	repair and paint benches around the village	376.25
Adam Welch	trim nettles and brambles overhanging school lane footpath	75.00
Blue Bury Contractors	grass cutting and clearing on the Lammas	1,020.00
Edward Brown	32 hours litterpick x £7.90	252.80
Wages and salaries	August/September 2012	1939.58
Christine Dinnin	Miscellaneous jubilee expenses	43.03
C-Trees	work to oak tree on sportsfield	1,400.00
N. J. Whitehead	Sportsfield hedge cutting	420.00
Frank Cooper & Son Limited	Grass cutting on sportsfield 3rd, 11th, 24th, 31st August 2012	244.80
		<u>9,041.86</u>
Cheques received		
Sports and Social Club	2nd quarter payment	337.50
		<u>337.50</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Floodlighting to 17.07.12	29.00	Laidlaw – 2 keys to external cupboard <u>46.58</u>
Sharon Ling – Pavilion	48.00	<u>46.58</u>
Jim Keen – Main Hall	60.00	
Richard Stringer – Main Hall	162.00	
Jenny Rigby – Pavilion	<u>72.00</u>	
	<u>371.00</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	September 2012	458.20
Veolia	Water	43.13
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials	72.47
		<u>1170.99</u>
Cheques received		
Sports and Social Club	2nd quarter payment	337.50
Shotokan Karate	Main Hall	124.20
Juliet Jamieson	Pavilion hire	45.50
Dave Boddy	Main Hall and Pavilion	275.40
Watton Youth Drop Inn	Main Hall and Pavilion	183.60
Methodist Church	Pavilion hire	48.00
Nicola Darby	Main Hall and Pavilion	32.50
Katherine Earl	Pavilion hire	21.00
Felicitas Dixon	Pavilion hire	28.00
E. Bainbridge	Pavilion hire	45.50
Mrs. D Folwell	Pavilion hire	52.50
East Herts Council	Pavilion hire	14.00
		<u>1207.70</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

- **Request for budget items for the year 2013/14**

Mr. Meischke asked all Parish Councillors to e-mail Mr. Filer any items they would like included in the 2012/13 budget, as soon as possible.

Action: Parish Councillors

Community Hall Trustees

In the absence of Mr. Poulton, Mr. Meischke reported on the following items

- **Damage to brick wall adjacent to the Community Hall**
Ted Brown informed the Clerk on 24th September, that the brick wall between the Community Hall and School Lane had been vandalised. This was reported to the police and Mark Blacktin has now repaired the damage with bricks obtained by Mr. Smith from the Abel Smith Estate.
- **Annual Playground Inspection**
Jackie Bruce, East Herts Council e-mailed (on 6th August) the annual playground inspection report.
Mr. Poulton e-mailed all Parish Councillors on 7th August as follows
‘I’ve been down to the sportsfield with the report and checked on the items.
Since the report has been completed somebody has been removing the wet pour from the bottom of the multi play by the steps
I feel this need replacing as soon as possible as this wet pour is only going to be pulled out more
If this is agreed, I suggest we get the other items that need repairing with wet pour namely the large swings and the spring horse
We also need to order two bolt cap covers for the spring seesaw
I thought last year when we had the report that we looked into signage but I’m not sure what happened, Jane could you investigate
The bin has always been loose from the post, do you want me to ask Mark Blacktin to see if this could be mended?
Could we get agreement to proceed with the wet pour, bolt cap covers and to secure the bin to the post?
I’ll get Ted to remove the moss and weed kill the area.’
East Herts Council, in October 2011, e-mailed the Clerk with RoSPA’s suggested wording for play area signage. It was agreed to forward this e-mail to Mr. Harris asking him if the Parish Council need to install a sign at the play area. **Action: J. Allsop**
Mr. Stock said that during his inspection of the play area, whilst carrying out the Monthly village- report, he had noted the damaged to the safety surface.
Mr. Meischke to inspect the safety and take action as required. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Electric meter**
British Gas will fit a smart electricity meter at the Community Hall on Monday 24th September.
- **Inside door in the Outside toilets**
Mr. Meischke said that the inside door of the outside toilets keeps jamming. It was agreed to ask Adrian Thompson to plane the door down so it fits correctly. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Boiler inspection**
The boiler inspection has been completed by James Turner Limited.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **MPPA – surface repair**
Halycon Courts have done a good job repairing the damage to the MPPA surface.
- **MPPA - painting**
The line-marking was not done because of the mixed weather conditions. Because of the difficulty in doing the line painting, it will be deferred. Mr. Knight said that he would be obtaining quotations to have the line-marking professionally applied and would submit these quotations to the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee for inclusion in the 2013/14 budget.
- **Sportsfield hedge**
The Clerk said that Mr. Smith had inspected the sportsfield hedge and it would appear that some of the gaps have been filled up by natural growth. However, the hedge needs reassessing when the nettles die down to see if any additional planting is required.
This item to be placed on the November agenda. **Agenda: 11/2012**
- **Sportsfield**
Mr. Knight said that someone had been using a metal detector on the sportsfield. Although they have been replacing the sods of grass, they can easily come out during sports activities on the field.
It was agreed to place a notice in the Parish News asking whoever is digging the holes to stop doing so.
Action: I. Knight

Environment Sub-Committee

In the absence of Mrs. Dinnin, Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Oak Tree on Sportsfield**

C-Trees have completed the first stage of work to the Oak tree on the sportsfield. This involved reducing each branch by 1.5 – 2 metres, distributed around the crown according to crown weight and removal of all deadwoods. C-Trees have done an excellent job with almost unnoticeable visual impact.

The installation of non-invasive Cobra bracing will take place between November and March.

- **Notice under the Oak Tree**

Mr. Knight said that the Parish Council had previously discussed putting a warning notice advising not to shelter under the Oak tree.

Ms. Waltham to put together some appropriate wording and forward it to Mr. Harris for his comments.

Action: E. Waltham

This item to be placed on the October Parish Council agenda.

Agenda: 10/12

Fencing around the Oak tree to be put on the October Parish Council agenda.

Agenda: 10/12

- **Abel Smith Estate - Jubilee Wood meeting on 14th September**

Parish Councillors agreed that Mr. Abel Smith had conducted an excellent public meeting on 14th September, when he presented his proposals for a Jubilee Wood in Watton-at-Stone. Villagers were invited to help with the planting, which starts later this autumn.

- **Allotment rent demand and water charges**

The allotment rent and water charge invoices are due to go out at the beginning of October. In the year 2011/2012, the water charges were £13 for a full allotment and £6.50 for a half plot.

The Clerk said that she had contacted the St. Albans Diocesan Board agents, Bidwells, who gave her the Veolia account number for the Glebe Allotments and informed her that the Parish Council are responsible for the water charges from 15th March 2012. The Clerk then contacted Veolia who informed her that the standing charges from 15th March to 30th September, plus the water consumption charges from 15th March to 25th August (56 units have been used) would be £85.06.

After discussion, Parish Councillors present agreed to reduce the annual water charges to £6.50 for a full allotment plot and £3.25 for a half plot for the year 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2013.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Consultation on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Hertfordshire**

Mr. Knight has completed the Hertfordshire County Council's consultation re Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Hertfordshire. This was submitted to Hertfordshire County Council via e-mail on 30th August.

b) Routine reports

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

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Smith carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests on Friday 14th September.

- ii) **Monthly village-report**

Mr. Stock completed the report on 16th September.

Mr. Stock said that his overall impression of the village, whilst carrying-out the monthly village-report, was that it looked very good indeed.

Only the adverse items highlighted in the monthly village-report are minuted.

- **Rainbow multi play and slide** - The safety surface at the foot of the wooden ladder is partially missing and lifting. This could get worse with winter weather. (He referred to item 8 a, Community Hall – Annual Playground Inspection.)
- **Floodlighting at MPPA** - one of the floodlighting guards is badly burnt.
Mr. Knight said that he was aware of the problem and until the light goes faulty, no action would be taken to replace it.
- **Oak tree**– the branch closest to Church Walk/horses field and the MPPA Floodlights may need cutting back soon. We need to keep an eye on it.
- **Kicker boards** – These looked tired and need re-staining or replacing.
- **Allotment entrance** – This needs cutting back. (Adam Welch has been instructed by Mrs. Dinnin to do this work.)
- **Salt bins** - some of the salt bins need filling. This item to be put on the October agenda. Mr. Stock felt that the salt bins should be inspected every month, regardless of the season, to ensure that any problems (such as damage or bins missing) are detected without delay.

Agenda:10/12

Mr. Stock said that he was concerned about the allocation of the existing salt bins. In some cases, the sizes appeared to be disproportionate to the area/location they served. **Agenda 10/12**

iii) Weekly sportsfield

Nothing to report.

v) Website

Mr. Stock said that we have received a 'cold-call' e-mail offering website services. He said that although the Parish Council website is primitive/fragile in some aspects, it did not warrant the Parish Council spending £30 per month on reworking/maintaining it at this stage. This was agreed.

v) Website diary

None.

9 Correspondence received

a) E-mail from Jill Andreanoff re Speeding issues - Whempstead Road

This item was discussed under item 2, Public Participation.

b) East Herts Council – Use of Community Hall as a Poling Station on Thursday 15th November 2012

East Herts Council have hired the Community Hall's Pavilion facilities for the purpose of a poling station for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections on 15th November.

10 Village organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Mr. Stock said that at the last meeting of the War Memorial Hall Management Committee everything was running smoothly. Their next meeting is on Thursday 20th September.

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

- **Watton Youth Drop Inn**

In the absence of Mr. Poulton, Lyn Oakman has taken over the responsibility of running the Watton Youth Drop Inn.

- **River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Knight said that the River Beane Restoration Association is currently very active and working in collaboration with the Herts and Essex Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency regarding improvements in the flow of the River Beane. The core focus remains reducing output from the Whitehall pumping station.

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

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

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

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

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

- **No meeting coz people on holiday**

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

11 Items for Parish News

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

- Use of metal detector on sportsfield.

Action: I. Knight

- **The meeting closed at 2043.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 16th October 2012.**