

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 19th February 2013

Present: Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman) Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
 Mrs. Christine Dinnin Mr. Denis Filer
 Mr. Iain Harris Mr. Ian Knight
 Mrs. Helen McCash Ms. Emma Waltham
 The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

Members of public: None

1 Apologies for absence

Leave of absence: Mr. Nigel Poulton.
 Apologies for absence: Mr. David Stock.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Smith had two additional items for this meeting.

- **East Herts Council Local Planning Policy meeting**
 Refer to item directly following 6 b ii, Planning decision – Beane Cottage, 11 Walkern Road.
- **Letter from Professor David Haslam**
 Refer to item directly following 8 e, Correspondence received - Benington Parish Council re request to grit the Whempstead Road to the A602.

Mr. Smith said that item 8 b, Correspondence received - East Herts Council –Tax base 2013-14 to be discussed under 7 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 15th January 2013**
 Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

b) Review of actions

1. **Contact residents of Glebe House re sportsfield hedge**
 Mr. Knight said that he had been unable to contact Mr. and Mrs. Wilson of Glebe House concerning the cutting back of the sportsfield hedge. Mrs. McCash said that they are currently away on holiday.
 Mr. Smith said that due to the nesting season this hedge could not be cut back until late summer/early autumn.
 Mr. Knight to contact Mr. and Mrs. Wilson to obtain their permission for the hedge to be cut back after the nesting season. **Action: I. Knight**
2. **Investigate further at the possibility of retro fitting an air source heat pump at the Community Hall**
 This item to be placed on the September agenda. **Agenda: 09/2013**
3. **Pass Diamond Jubilee photographic booklet back to Mr. Meischke after inspection**
 Ms. Waltham gave Mr. Meischke the booklet before the start of this meeting.
5. **Pass Diamond Jubilee photographic booklet to Alan Rattue for inspection**
 Now that Mr. Meischke is in possession of the booklet, he will pass it to Alan Rattue for inspection.
Action: J. Meischke
6. **Carry-out 9-monthly inspection of accounts before the February Parish Council meeting**
 Refer to item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee - 9-monthly inspection of accounts.
7. **Confirm situation about Clerks Tax and NI and telephone charges**
 Refer to item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee - Clerks Tax and NI.

c) Action points resolved

1. E-mail the sportsfield byelaws to Mr. Smith, Mr. Meischke and Mr. Harris
2. Forward Mr. Slater’s letter to PC Andy Woodward and invite him to speak to the Parish Council
3. Attend Launch of the Beane and Mimram Catchment Plan on 23rd January
4. Write to East Herts Council re planning application for Beane Cottage
5. Write to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Beane Cottage
6. Inspect the area you live in and report lighting and roadway faults to the Clerk
7. Contact Hertfordshire Highways re dangers of light out at the top of the Hockerill slope
8. List all Lighting and Highways faults and upload document to the website
9. Ask McCash and Hay to confirm situation about Clerks Tax and NI
10. Obtain quotations for the repair of the brick wall adjacent to the Community Hall
11. Look back at old e-mails concerning any agreement for a notice at the play area
12. Ask A. P. Access to fit two identical locks to the external doors at the Community Hall
13. Ask Adam Welch to provide his best quotation for the removal of the tree on Parish Council land at Rivershill
14. Contact Allotment holders association re pothole part way down the allotment access road
15. Ask Adam Welch to put down some chippings on the Mill Lane end of the Lammas footpath
16. Arrange for the Community Hall windows to be cleaned
17. Update the ‘out of date’ notice on MPPA
18. Remove Poppy wreaths from around the War Memorial by 1st week in February
19. Ask Hertfordshire Highways to refill the salt bins in the village as soon as possible
20. Send a copy of Martin Ketcher’s e-mail re Water vole survey to all Parish Councillors
21. Send R.B.R.A. donation towards their running costs
22. **Draft a response to Charlotte Bell, (Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) re survey on Lammas stretch of the River Beane for Mr. Smith’s approval**
 Mr. Knight said that the Herts Wildlife Trust advised that the Environment Agency would pay for any recommended works to the Lammas stretch of the River Beane.

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) 51c High Street, Watton-at-Stone (3/13/0028/FP)

Single storey front and two-storey side extension

Mr. Harris said that 51c High Street is located opposite the doctors’ surgery and the last house before Mill Lane. The applicant is seeking permission to demolish the garage adjoined to the property and put in its stead a two-storey extension. There will be the loss of a garage, but the application states there is sufficient on site parking for five cars.

Having looked at the site and its environs, there are no immediate neighbours. There is an adjoining house but it abuts the left-hand side and the plans are for the right hand side.

Mr. Harris proposed a no comment response and following approval from Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock, the Clerk was instructed to e-mail East Herts Council accordingly.

b) Decisions

i) 32 Rivershill, Watton-at-Stone sg14 3SD (3/12/1969/FP)

Replacement single storey rear utility extension and part of garage

- East Herts Council – permission granted

ii) Beane Cottage, 11 Walkern Road, Watton-at-Stone (3/12/2062/FP)

Two-storey side extension to East

- East Herts Council – permission granted

Mr. Smith said that as a result of his action point (item 5c Action points resolved - Write to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Beane Cottage) David Taylor wrote on 18th February as follows.

‘Further to our recent telephone conversation regarding planning application for extension to Beane Cottage, I have amended drawings regarding licenced land beside the bridge and submitted these to LPA.

We have since received approval from LPA and as discussed with you, the laurels beside the extension might be able to be retained. Alternatively, we remove them for building purposes and replace with alternative species approved by the Parish Council after the completion of build.

In recent years, I have maintained the laurels to keep them to a lower level otherwise, they would not be about 10-12 feet high.

Please contact me should there be any further concerns by the Parish Council regarding section 106 land.’

The Parish Council agreed to monitor the situation once building work commences.

• **East Herts Council Local Planning Policy meeting**

Mr. Smith said that he would be attending the next East Herts Council Local Planning Policy meeting, on Friday 8th March at the Council Offices (Wallfields, Hertford).

Mr. Smith to give his report on the meeting at the March Parish Council meeting **Action: M. Smith**

7 Specific items

a) Nigel Poulton – leave of absence

Parish Councillors agreed to extend Nigel Poulton’s leave of absence until the start of the new Civic Year, May 2013. The Clerk to notify East Herts Council accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Beane Cottage

Refer to 6 b ii, planning decision – Beane Cottage, 11 Walkern Road.

c) Meeting dates for the Civic Year 2013/14

It was agreed that Parish Council meetings shall continue to be held on the third Tuesday in the month, namely:

- Tuesday 21st May 2013
- Tuesday 18th June 2013
- Tuesday 16th July 2013
- Tuesday 17th September 2013
- Tuesday 15th October 2013
- Tuesday 19th November 2013
- Tuesday 17th December 2013
- Tuesday 21st January 2014
- Tuesday 18th February 2014
- Tuesday 18th March 2014
- Tuesday 15th April 2014

The Parish Council meeting on the 21st May 2013 will be preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting (starting at 1900) and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

d) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

• **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash – Receipts

None

Cheques issued

River Beane Restoration Assoc
 Jim Morrissey
 Glasdon UK
 Salaries and Wages
 Post Office Limited
 Glasdon UK
 CDA for Herts
 Blue Bury Contractors
 Blue Bury Contractors
 J. Allsop

Petty cash - Payments

None

Donation towards running costs	25.00
Internal audit fee 2011/12	100.00
Recycled bench to be located on the Lammas	403.76
February 2013	938.19
Tax and NI	218.34
Litterbin with metal liner	73.23
Annual membership subscription	30.00
Supply and plant Berberis	24.90
Concrete in fencing around oak tree on sportsfield	162.77
Phone charges to 02/2013	21.90
	<u>1998.09</u>

Cheques received

Andrew May	Allotment rent to 30.09.13	13.50
Alan Cross	Allotment rent to 30.09.13	13.25
		<u>26.75</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts

Floodlighting to 15.01.13	60.00
Sharon Ling – Pavilion	24.00
Jim Keen – Main Hall	40.00
Kate Hodges – Main Hall & Pavilion	58.50
Dots and Tots – Main Hall	16.00
Victoria Stuart - Main Hall plus Pavilion	<u>45.50</u>
	<u>244.00</u>

Petty Cash -Payments

HCC – cleaning materials	33.12
	<u>33.12</u>

Cheques issued

Sportsmark	2 sets of boot brushes	213.55
East Herts Council	Rates	119.00
Wages	February 2013	566.10
Gary Smith	Window cleaning	58.00
Stevenage Glass	Replace changing room broken window	<u>247.20</u>
		<u>1203.85</u>

Cheques received

Aston	Main Hall and Pavilion	52.00
Watton Youth Drop Inn	Main Hall and Pavilion	306.00
Shotokan Karate	Main Hall	<u>90.00</u>
		<u>448.00</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **9-monthly inspection of accounts**

Mrs. McCash said she carried out the 9-monthly inspection of accounts on Monday 18th February and found everything to be in order.

• **Clerks Tax and NI**

The Clerk left the meeting while this item was discussed.

Mrs. McCash confirmed that as of 5th April 2013, the Clerk will be required to pay tax on her housing allowance. The telephone bills she submits will not be taxable unless fixed rate bills are submitted.

Parish Councillors agreed to increase the housing allowance awarded to the Clerk, so that the current take home figure remains the same after tax and NI has been subtracted.

Mrs. McCash said that the Parish Council need to allow approximately £3 per month to cover the tax and NI on the monthly housing allowance. However, she will check these figures at the beginning of the tax year.

Action: H. McCash

The Clerk returned to the meeting.

• **East Herts Council –Tax base 2013-14**

Mr. Smith said that due to a change in the way Housing Benefits and Council tax are paid/collected our Tax Base is lessened. To avoid undue increases in Council tax for those paying, a grant of £2,488.97 has been made available to the Parish Council so that we can precept less by that amount. The net effect is that Council Tax payers will see no increase in the Parish Councils precept. It was agreed to reduce the precept request accordingly.

The Precept forms, requesting the sum of £ 27,576.03, were duly signed by Mr. Smith, Mr. Filer, and Mr. Meischke and countersigned by the Clerk.

The completed precept form to be returned to East Herts Council.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

• **Sportsfield play area sign**

The following wording to be used on a sign for the sportsfield play area.

‘Watton at Stone Parish Council provides this playground for children under 14 years

Please enjoy it with care and consideration for yourselves and others.

If you see any problems please contact the Parish Clerk - clerk@watton-pc.org.uk.

For emergency services ring 112.’

Mr. Meischke to obtain two quotations from sign makers.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Child Protection Policy**
Child Protection Policy to be placed on the next meeting of the Community Hall Trustees.
Trustees: 04/2013
- **Damaged brick wall at the entrance of the car park**
Mr. Meischke said that he had an upfront discussion with the Community Hall insurance brokers, Norris and Fisher, informing them that we had no idea how the damage occurred to the brick wall. Two estimates for the repair of the damaged brick wall have been submitted to Norris and Fisher together with pictures of the wall before and after it was damaged. They will be submitting these to our insurers.
- **Report on meeting with PC Andy Woodward**
Mr. Meischke reported that he and Mr. Smith met with PC Andy Woodward to discuss the vandalism and nuisance problems down at the Community Hall and surrounding areas. PC Andy Woodward suggested that improving lighting in the area would have a major effect and the installation of a CCTV camera. It was suggested that a lamppost sited in the area where the Community Hall brick wall has fallen down would be optimum and CCTV cameras could be attached to the lighting column.
Mr. Meischke to obtain quotations for the installation of a lamppost and wiring for CCTV camera.
Action: J. Meischke
- Mr. Meischke said that Trevor Blacktin has informed him that when the foundations for the Community Hall were being dug, there is a large concrete block that they were unable to remove. This block is in the area of the proposed lamppost so we could have problems trying to install it.
- **New external door locks**
A. P. Access have installed the two new external locks and the Clerk has issued replacement keys to all but the following key holders.
 - Watton School, who hold and emergency set.
 - Mr. Stock, who is currently away on holiday.
 - Cricket Club
 The Clerk to issue keys to the above.
Action: J. Allsop

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight had reported on the following items.

- **MPPA**
 - **Surface maintenance**
Mr. Knight recommended that the Parish Council proceed with the surface treatment (washing, surfacing bonding, painting plus lines) of the MPPA. The work needs to be done during the Spring/Summer when there can be some dry periods. Most suitable for the Tennis Club would be early April to minimise problems with match fixtures.
Mr. Knight said he had obtained three quotations as follows.

Doe Sport (they did the most recent resurfacing work on the MPPA)	£4800 inc VAT
Halcyon Courts (they have done pressure washing for us)	£5712 inc VAT
Sports Courts (they have not done work for use before)	£4800 inc VAT

 He recommended that the Parish Council use Sports Courts because they come strongly recommended by Datchworth Tennis Club, who recently had similar work done to their tennis courts.
Funding for this project was agreed by the Parish Council under item 13 of the 2013/14 budget notes as follows.

‘MPPA (maintenance) – pressure wash £290 x 2 days plus 20% VAT (additional £5,000 for additional pressure washing, surfacing bonding and repainting line-markings etc to be taken out of reserves).’

 Parish Councillors agreed to accept Sports Courts quotation.
Action: I. Knight
The funding for this project to come out of reserves, minus the budget provision for pressure washing.
 - **Faulty floodlight**
Mr. Knight said that the floodlighting bulb, that has a damaged protective screen over it (on the Rectory side of the MPPA), has blown. He agreed to arrange for the bulb to be replaced and see if it is still covered by guarantee.
Action: I. Knight

Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Report on the Launch of the Beane and Mimram Catchment Plan held on 23rd January**
Mr. Knight said that he and Mrs. Dinnin attended the launch of the Beane and Mimram catchment plan.

Mr. Knight has subsequently e-mailed all Parish Councillors the link to the Herts and Essex wildlife trust website, which shows the different ways they are trying to improve the Rivers Beane and Mimram. Currently, five MPs are also on the case and publicity has been increased. Ultimately, there is only one thing that will help improve the River Beane and that is the closing of the White Hall pumping station.

• **Pot holes on Allotments**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Allotment and Garden Association have sourced material to fill in holes on the access road on the allotments. When they have obtained the material the Allotment and Garden Association will fill in the holes.

• **Water supply on the Allotments**

Mr. Smith will be turning on the water supply to the allotments on 1st March. **Action: M. Smith**

• **Oak Tree on Sportsfield**

C-Trees have completed the bracing work to the Oak tree on the sportsfield and have submitted their invoice of £1,400 for payment. The Clerk confirmed that the amount invoiced was correct.

The Clerk to arrange payment.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Parish Council land at Rivershill**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Adam Welch has provided his lowest bid for the clearance work at Rivershill. This was submitted to Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson (52 Rivershill), who said it was too expensive and they can get the work done for £350.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson to be asked to complete the clearance work, which is the removal of one of their trees that has fallen onto Parish Council land, by May this year.

Action: M. Smith

Mr. Meischke to see if the rubbish pile at the entrance of the Parish Council land at Rivershill has been removed.

Action: J. Meischke

• **Watton Ramblers – Memorial bench**

Mr. Smith said that the Watton Ramblers have given the Parish Council a donation of £340 towards the cost of a Memorial seat for the Lammas, in memory of Mr. Everett. The seat has been purchased from Glasdon UK and Mrs. Dinnin and Mr. Smith have agreed that it can be located at the bottom of the Lammas slope near the steps and will not be in the way of the grass cutting contractors.

e) **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 prior to the meeting.

During the test, the emergency light in the changing room corridor was found not to be working.

The Clerk to contact D. P. Electrics Limited requesting that they repair the light.

Action: J. Allsop

ii) **Monthly village-report**

Mr. Harris completed the report on 16th and 17th February.

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

• **Play area surface** - is very lumpy under the swings. Mr. Meischke to inspect. **Action: J. Meischke**

• **Salt bins** – most of the salt bins are either empty or partly empty. The Clerk to request that all the salt bins are filled. **Action: J. Allsop**

iii) **Weekly sportsfield**

None.

iv) **Website**

The Clerk to upload the following documents to the Watton-at-Stone website.

• Child Protection Policy

• Child Protection Good Practice Guidelines

Action: J. Allsop

v) **Website diary**

None.

vi) **Highway faults**

Mr. Smith said that Highways faults will be a monthly agenda item to allow councillors to highlight faults in the parish.

The following faults to be reported or their status chased.

• Lamppost 5 – School Lane.

• Lamppost 59 Station Road.

• Lamppost between Great Innings and Moorymead Close.

• Lamppost on the footpath between Rivershill and High Street.

• Potholes in Hazeldell

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Filer said that he had already requested the Clerk to report two large potholes in Perrywood Lane. One of these potholes was recently repaired but the repair has already broken up.

8 Correspondence received

a) E Contacting the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Mrs. McCash agreed to complete the new Police and Crime Commissioners on-line questionnaire.

Action: H. McCash

b) East Herts Council –Tax base 2013-14

Refer to item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

c) E-mail from Jill Andreanoff re Request for measures to control speeding, Whempstead Road, Whempstead

Mr. Smith read out an e-mail (dated 2nd February) from Jill Andreanoff and his letter of reply dated 12th February.

‘The residents of Whempstead are very disappointed at this outcome but are resolved not to give up in the light of the fatality last year. Since our last communication, another lamppost was knocked down in the road presumably by yet another speeding car. Again, I would be fairly certain that the incident was not recorded by Mouchel.

Could you please let me know when we can expect further funding to be available for the recommendations to be carried out? It does seem ludicrous that a full report was carried out with definite recommendations and yet no action is being taken to implement them. The report (which presumably in itself was a costly process) it seems was done in vain.

Or perhaps you can let me know how I might appeal to this decision or investigate further funding sources.’

Mr. Smith’s reply read as follows.

‘Whilst the Parish Council has every sympathy with your plight, the most we can do is lobby on your behalf. We have highway related problems within the village but all we can do is make the case to Herts Highways authority and take our place in the priority queue. We are not aware of any Parish Councils that take on highway improvements, as this would spike the budgets beyond the acceptable. The odd footpath is about as far as we can go. It may be worth making your views known to our MP, Oliver Heald, at one of his surgeries in the village. His next surgery is due to take place on Saturday 16th March at the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall. As for the lamppost, I was there when it was being removed and it was their opinion that it had been undermined by rabbits and the prolonged wet weather and had simply fallen over in the wind. There were no signs of collision.

I am sorry that I’m not able to be more positive on this issue.’

It was agreed to e-mail Jill Andreanoff to ask her if she would be attending the Oliver Heald surgery on Saturday 16th March.

Action: J. Allsop

d) County Councillor Bryan Hammond – Locality grant

The Clerk said that she had been successful in obtaining a grant of £39.80 from Bryan Hammond’s locality grant towards the cost of a litterbin, to be located adjacent to the Beadle Memorial seat. The cost of the litterbin (excluding VAT) is £36.50, plus a £5 minimum order charge.

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Beadle family will arrange for the litterbin to be installed. They have also agreed to empty the bin as and when required.

e) Benington Parish Council re request to grit the Whempstead Road to the A602

Pam Harrison, Clerk to the Benington Parish Council has forwarded the following e-mail from Sue Hewlett (40 Whempstead Road, Benington).

‘I am very concerned about the state of the road from Whempstead crossroads out to the A602, in this very snowy weather. I know Herts Highways grit the bus route which goes up through Dane End, but it is along way to go round and in this day and age with the price of petrol and with everybody trying to be "greener", I do feel something should be done to get this road gritted. Not to mention how dangerous this road is when it is snowy and icy, as most people use this stretch of road to get in and out of Benington, as this is the most direct route. I wondered if, Highways will not do it, could not perhaps the Parish council pay somebody to grit this length of road in bad weather conditions.

I and most people in the village would be most grateful if something could be done.

I look forward to your comments.’

This stretch of road is in the parish of Watton-at-Stone and not Benington.

Mrs. Harrison has spoken to Highways and unfortunately, they will only fund the gritting of major routes. The Hertsdirect website shows the gritting areas in Hertfordshire. Gritting takes place in the following order.

- A roads but not motorways or trunk roads
- B roads and one entrance/exit to each village
- Major Bus routes

The road from the Whempstead crossroads to the A602 is only gritted in extreme conditions, when the temperature falls very low or there is water running along the route, which may cause ice to form.

Parish Councillors noted Sue Hewlett's concerns, however it is not within the Parish Council's remit to have gritting carried out.

- **Letter from Professor David Haslam**

Mr. Smith read out the following letter (dated 15th January) from Professor Haslam.

'First of all apologies for the later response to your letter dated 26th November. What with the Christmas rush and pressure of work with the dread Novo Virus, I am afraid that your letter was put to the bottom of my pile.

Regarding the provision of a defibrillator in the village, there needs to be someone available who is trained in when and how to use it and, therefore, you are quite correct in saying that if used by an inexperienced person, more harm than good could be caused.

I would therefore have to advise against it. However, I would be more than happy to have a chat with you to explain the pros and cons in more details.'

It was agreed to e-mail Adam Welch a copy of Professor Haslam's letter.

Action: J. Allsop

9 Village organisations

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

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

- **Watton Youth Drop Inn**

Mr. Meischke said that since November, attendance at Watton Youth Drop Inn has significantly reduced. The maximum attendance during this period was 14 young people attending one week and only nine attended at their last meeting.

The Watton Youth Club committee will be holding a meeting on 7th March to discuss how to increase attendance. The Parish Council expressed their hope that the Watton Youth Drop Inn can remain open.

Mr. Meischke said that they would want to keep the club open up to the point that money runs out. He hoped that when the warmer weather arrives numbers would increase.

Mr. Knight said that Watton Youth Drop Inn do not advertise or release articles in the Parish News and this could be a good means for increasing numbers.

- **River Beane Restoration Association:** Nothing to report.

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

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

- **Watton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association**

Refer to 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.

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

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

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

- **Watton-at-Stone Parish Church**

Mrs. McCash said that a Lady Vicar, Jenny Grey, has been appointed as the new Rector for the parishes of Bramfield, Stapleford, Waterford, and Watton-at-Stone. She will live at the Rectory in Watton-at-Stone. Her licensing service is due to be held on Thursday 2nd May at 2000 in the Church of St Andrew and St Mary, Watton-at-Stone.

10 Items for Parish News

No items were identified for inclusion in the March 2013 issue of the Parish News.

- **The meeting closed at 2033.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 19th March 2013.**