

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 17th December 2013

Present: Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman) Mrs. Christine Dinnin
Mr. Denis Filer Mr. Ian Knight
Mr. David Stock Ms. Emma Waltham
The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

Members of public: Mr. Rik Sharma (District Councillor)
Ms. Rebecca Mason, EHC (until 1935)
Mr. John Bosworth working on behalf of EHC (until 1935)
Mrs. Lindsay Holt, Abel Smith Estate Housing Manager (until 1943)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mr. Iain Harris, Mrs. Helen McCash, Mr. John Meischke and Mrs. Margaret Stanley.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Smith had one additional item, refer to item 8 e, Specific items.

- East Herts Council - Local Development Framework meeting - 12th December 2013.

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Presentation from East Herts Council re draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Watton-at-Stone

Mr. Smith welcomed Rebecca Mason and John Bosworth to the meeting and invited them to give Parish Councillors a brief summary of their conservation area appraisal for Watton-at-Stone.

Mr. Bosworth said that Watton-at-Stone has a very fine conservation area with all the attributes of quality buildings and quality spaces. East Herts Council is reviewing the conservation area because the government requires this to be done from time to time to see if they are still fit for purpose. Mr. Bosworth said he tries to take practical issues that might be apparent and make suggestions where relevant. The Parish as a whole has 50-listed buildings of which 26 lie within the conservation area. They range from 15th century to 20th century buildings. In addition, 25 buildings have been identified as candidates for listed building status. These buildings have high quality features such as fine chimneys and windows. The law as it stands would allow the owner of these dwellings to remove these quality features under permitted development and listing the buildings would stop this from happening. The Government advises that these introductions should be used sparingly. High quality trees in open areas within the conservation area are also often listed with Tree Preservation Orders.

In respect of the conservation boundaries, Mr. Bosworth said that they have suggested that two areas should be removed. One in School Lane and the other off Perrywood Lane. Conservation areas and their boundaries are determined by their historic or architectural interest. The School Lane site it is felt no longer holds any areas of historic or architectural interest. It was pointed out that this is not entirely true as one of the old school buildings is still in existence. The Perrywood Lane site is an undistinguished area and has no architectural or conservation interest. Once this area is removed from the conservation area it will be put back into the green belt.

Mr. Bosworth said that at the East Herts Council public meeting held on 13th November they had been castigated by members of the public for the lack of advertising of the draft conservation appraisal. He said 20 people attended the meeting however, no feedback responses have been received. Mr. Smith said that East Herts Council have received at least one response because the Parish Council has been copied with that response. At their November meeting, Parish Councillors raised their concerns about the insufficient notification timescale.

Mr. Bosworth said that following the public meeting he had a very productive meeting with Lindsay Holt and was pleased to report that the properties in the Abel Smith estate ownership are kept in a very good condition. The Abel Smith estate are concerned about the rigid restrictions they will have to adhere to if more of their properties are listed. Lindsay Holt said that the estate welcomes a closer relationship with East Herts Council so that they can discuss building features but without the restrictions of listed building status.

Parish Councillors agreed that they would like another public consultation meeting and the date suggested by Rebecca Mason was Friday 7th March at 1830 in the Community Hall. Rebecca Mason agreed to e-mail the Clerk to confirm this date.

Action: R. Mason

Ms. Rebecca Mason and Mr. John Bosworth left the meeting.

Lindsay Holt said that the Abel Smith Estate are going to make a number of objections about the restrictions on the majority of their buildings and will also comment to East Herts Council that they do not have any intention of any inappropriate works.

They would like to suggest fostering a stronger working relationship with the East Herts Council. Up to now, they have not always known whom to contact at East Herts Council. The Abel Smith Estate want to care for the buildings they own and do not want to sell them, but want to retain and preserve them. If they have too many restrictions put on them, it would make it difficult for the estate to manage the buildings.

Watton-at-Stone is the flagship for the Abel Smith estate and they would not jeopardise this flagship.

Lindsey Holt left meeting at 19.43.

6 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 19th November 2013**
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

b) Review of actions

1. **Invoice Sports and Social club for additional keys supplied** - outstanding. **Action: J. Allsop**
The Clerk said that she had received the additional external door keys from Michael Lewis (A. P. Access) but had not been invoiced for the keys yet and therefore cannot invoice the Sports and Social Club yet.
2. **Obtain quotations for tennis net winder mechanism** - outstanding. **Action: I. Knight**
3. **Obtain quotations for new tennis nets** – outstanding. **Action: I. Knight**
4. **Organise meeting to discuss traffic issues in the village**
Refer to item 8a, Specific items - Traffic along Station Road and the High Street.
5. **Investigate the need to a Child Protection Policy**
Mr. Harris was not present at the meeting so it was agreed to defer discussions until the January 2014 Parish Council meeting. **Agenda: 01/2014**
6. **Obtain quotations for the painting of the high-level windows and some external doors**
Mr. Smith said that Mr. Meischke is in the process of obtaining quotations. **Action: J. Meischke**
7. **Investigate sites for additional football pitches**
Mr. Smith said that this is a work in progress. **Action: M. Smith**

c) Action points resolved

1. Chase Michael Lewis re cutting of additional keys to the external door of the Community Hall
2. Meet on 22nd November to draw up a draft budget for 2014/15
3. Give budget for 2014/2015 items to Mr. Filer
4. Arrange change of bank signatories
5. Contact Mr. and Mrs. Taylor re Licence for land adjacent to Beane Cottage
6. Write to Steffan Battle (Procon Limited) re development of 1-3 Mill Lane
7. Ask Football Club to remove their equipment from the changing rooms
8. **Write to Ian Sharratt (East Herts Council) re S106 funding**
Ms. Waltham said that she had e-mailed Iain Sharratt after he had received the Parish Council's letter, however she had received no response. Mr. Smith said that Mr. Sharratt can be difficult to get hold off. Ms. Waltham agreed to continue to try and make contact with Iain Sharratt. **Action: E. Waltham**
9. Arrange for allotment plots identified by Mrs. Dinnin to be rotovated
10. **Obtain cost of material needed at War Memorial garden and obtain quotation for doing the work**
Mrs. Dinnin said that this item is outstanding. **Action: C. Dinnin**
11. Report lights out to HCC Highways faults
12. Contact the Clerk re attending East Herts Highway Liaison Meeting on 27th November 2013
13. Report on East Herts Highway Liaison Meeting on 27th November 2013
14. Write to Dr Norden in response to his two letters concerning traffic issues
15. Invite EHC Conservation Officer to attend the December parish council meeting and notify Abel Smith estate
16. Add interactive computer screen for Pre-School Playgroup to the New Homes bonus potential funding list
17. Write Parish news insert

7 Planning

a) Applications

In the absence of Mr. Harris, Mr. Stock reported on the following items.

i) **The Old Chapel, Whempstead Road, Whempstead, Herts, SG12 0PL (3/13/1941/FP)**

Replacement of existing flat roof with semi-pitched/part flat roof and extension of existing balcony to allow access to the roof area

In accordance with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris liaised with Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke and it was agreed by them that the Parish Council should send a 'No comment' response to the planning department. The Clerk was instructed to write to East Herts Council accordingly.

ii) **Recreation Ground, School Lane, Watton At Stone, Hertford, Herts, SG14 3SF (3/13/2016/FP)**

Construction of tennis court adjacent to existing two tennis courts with flood lighting

Mr. Harris e-mailed Mr. Stock and Mr. Knight on 6th December as follows,

'Even if the protocol does apply to this I think we should reply as previously'

Mr. Stock and Mr. Knight were in agreement with this and the Clerk was instructed to write to East Herts Council as follows. 'Because the Parish Council is the applicant, they cannot comment on the above application.'

b) Decisions

i) **55 Hazeldell (3/13/1657/FP)**

Replace flat roof with pitched roof to front, new front canopy and single storey rear extension

-East Herts Council permission granted

8 Specific items

a) **Traffic along Station Road and the High Street**

Mr. Smith said that there is £119,250 set aside in the S106 funding from the Station Road development that is earmarked for road improvements.

During our Parish Council meeting in November, County Councillor Ken Crofton was given an action to contact Mrs. Rosemary Chatindo to ask her to arrange a meeting between Hertfordshire Highways, District Councillor Rik Sharma and the Parish Council with regards to Station Road.

Ken Crofton subsequently forwarded an e-mail from Paul Chappell (dated 28th November) in which he states.

'In the first instance, it is important therefore to note that potential traffic calming measures would only be considered if speeds are in fact significantly in excess of the speed limit and not simply on the basis of an increase in traffic flow as suggested by the parish council. It is also important to note that the sum available is not a substantial one and is also intended to support the delivery of improvements to public transport and/or measures that will encourage users of the development to travel by means other than the private car.'

On 9th December Mike Freeman e-mailed us the results of the traffic-speed monitoring carried out in Watton-at-Stone during October, November and December 2013. The areas targeted were Walkern Road, the High Street and Station Road. A total of 456 vehicles were monitored, of which 6% were driven at speeds between 36-39 mph and 4% at 40+ mph. There are no statistics for vehicles traveling between 31-35 mph. Mr. Freeman said that 'First advice/warning letters' had been sent to all of the drivers whose speeds were recorded at speeds of 36 mph and above. He added that there was some evidence that drivers were increasingly aware of the monitoring being performed and were moderating their speed accordingly.

Mr. Smith said that he had visited Station Road, at various times on different days, to monitor the traffic flow and talk to pedestrians. He also met with Councillor Ken Crofton on 10th December and e-mailed all Parish Councillors his report on both.

Mr. Stock referred to the content of his e-mail response to Mr. Smith's e-mail re visits to Station Road (all Parish Councillors were copied) and said that the concerns of parents and other residents about the ever-increasing traffic along Station Road and the related safety issues had been raised and discussed now, on and off, over a considerable period and without action; mainly due to a lack of funding. It had been hoped that this lack of progress would be resolved as part of the Gatekeeper Meadow development.

His continued by saying that regardless of the number of speeding vehicles he remained convinced some form of traffic-calming remains a major objective and should not be side-lined and that access to current Section 106 funding was an opportunity that we should not miss. He said that the problems in Station Road concern the safety of the ever-increasing number of pedestrians crossing this busy road and those of us that have done so will appreciate that crossing Station Road during periods of heavy traffic and via the existing crossing-points can present problems; especially for school children, the elderly, people with mobility problems, or parents with young children/pushchairs etc. The two main crossing-points being the footpath on the opposite side of the road to the post box at the Rectory Lane junction (at the top of the hill and not far from the curved blind-summit), and the 'school-crossing' point which sits directly between the Hazeldell and Glebe Close

junctions. Obviously new 'natural' crossing-points have come to be since people continue to move into the new houses.

After lengthy discussion about the issues raised, the Parish Councillors present agreed that the main cause for concern is pedestrian safety and they were not currently overly-worried about/aware of any issues concerning driver-safety.

Station Road is complex in its nature and use, and has five junctions that lead onto it, plus the access to the Doctor's and Dentist's surgeries. There is also the possibility of an additional junction if the Hertfordshire County Council yard between Moorymead Close and Hazeldell, is developed. Because of this, and bearing in mind the loss of a 'Lollipop Person', the concern for pedestrian safety is such that it was agreed that we need to investigate and agree upon the type of traffic-calming measures that would be appropriate for Station Road [e.g. raised crossing point(s), zebra crossing, pelican crossing, etc.]. Because of the loss of a 'Lollipop Person' it was felt that a permanent crossing of some type would be appropriate for the 'school-crossing' point.

The Clerk to forward the above minute, via e-mail, to Mrs. Rosemary Chatindo (Highways Agency), County Councillor Ken Crofton and cc District Councillor Rik Sharma. **Action: J. Allsop**

Parish Councillors then discussed the traffic issues concerning the southern end of the High Street (i.e., between its junction with Station Road and the entrance to Rivershill).

In the main this concerns the occurrence of excessive on-street parking and the problems it causes to road users and pedestrians. There continues to be numerous instances of conflicts between vehicles trying to pass each other and at times having to mount the pavement to do so. It was acknowledged that in addition to the congestion caused some of the problems were not helped by driver attitude/behavior.

It was suggested that one obvious option would be to have no-parking zones outside the Bull, Crumbs (the tea shop) and the Chinese take-away. However this could make it difficult for/deter people from using these village-facilities, including the supermarket and post office and only push the existing problems further down the High Street and/or into Rivershill.

It was noted that the residents of some of the houses along the stretch of road between the Station Road junction and the George and Dragon had no option but to park on the High Street (as they have for many years).

The possibility of a passing-place somewhere in the area was mentioned, as was the need for additional parking.

Mr. Smith said that the Highways Department will be in Watton-at-Stone during January to discuss the Station Road and High Street issues and it is important that the Parish Council has a firm 'wish list' in place to present to them during their visit.

This item to remain on agenda.

Agenda: 01/2014

b) Report on East Herts Highway Liaison Meeting on 27th November 2013

Mr. Smith attended the East Herts Highway Liaison meeting on 27th November and e-mailed his report to all Parish Councillors, as follows.

'Thought I would bring you up to date with the highways meeting I attended last week. They admitted that the change of contractor had been more challenging than expected but there was light at the end of the tunnel. However, the glum faces of county councillors told a different story and I believe there's a long way to go yet.

Less money dictates a lean and mean strategy. All works will be divided into planned, cyclical and responsive categories. They will rely even more on public reporting of problems preferably on their website but also by automated phone contact and parish councils will have no special recourse to the system. They want accurate reporting because that will decide whether an incident requires a response or can be cyclical with other jobs in the area. Their interactive map is being continuously upgraded so we can see if an event has been logged into the system. It will soon be possible to upload pictures of the offending potholes. Some people asked if the terminology used on the website tick-boxes could be given explanatory notes as the official jargon can be misleading unless you are in the know.

Each local County Councillor has £90,000, which he can spend on highway matters. However even that sum doesn't go that far and major works still need a long lead in time. Smaller maintenance jobs might be better suited to these funds like footpath repairs.

There was a lot of argy-bargy about hedges particularly roadside hedges but also footpath and the rules are as we understand them. The biggest gripe on rural roads was potholes. It was explained that these were mostly due to the collapse of the road edge due to more/heavier/larger traffic squeezing past and breaking up the more fragile road edge.

While we are talking hedges has anyone noticed that the willow tree on the Hazeldell junction has gone? I wonder if after all the grief we got whether Highways had a little word. Interesting.

Lights were mentioned, promises made, but I think we still need to keep our powder dry.'

c) Installation of plaque at 1 High Street (formerly the Waggon and Horses public house)

Mr. Smith said that the commemorative plaque has now been installed over the former bar door on the High Street side of the former Waggon and Horses public house.

d) S106 funding from Station Road development

Mr. Smith highlighted that a considerable sum of money stemming from the Gatekeeper development greening fund was available for projects in this category. To that end it was suggested that we look at two main areas, our environmental areas and our playground facilities. The Parish Council will work with the Playground fundraisers on that issue and take professional advice on The Lammas, starting with current plans to enhance the river Beane, Watton Green and the Cottage site."

e) East Herts Council - Local Development Framework meeting - 12th December 2013

Mr. Smith said that he attended the Local Development Framework meeting, now known as the District Plan on 12th December. This meeting was to introduce part 2 of the emerging plan.

It describes in some detail the day-to-day considerations of planning by first describing in comparatively lay terms the argument for and desired results of a whole range of scenarios and to that extent some are more relevant to us than others. It then lays down the relevant planning guidance for that topic and that's what we will see in the final document.

I am suggesting that everyone casts their eye over the document, be choosy by all means but it's not bad reading.

Part one of the district plan is nearing completion. I think a huge development at Bishops Stortford is at a crucial stage and that is what has delayed it. It provides the overarching framework for planning going forward, has lots of technical detail. Local authorities are now required to work with their neighbours so that a joined up strategy emerges which is supposed to deal with infrastructure as a major consideration . All this has to fit within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The complete document will be presented to full council on the 29th January 2014 and will go into 12 weeks of consultation. How this affects Watton at Stone will determine whether or not we need to set in motion the production of a Parish Plan. They were at pains to point out that local knowledge was important to them and so if we have concerns we should at least appraise the planners of them.

9 Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

• **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments	
1 Allotment holders	<u>13.25</u>	None	
	<u>13.25</u>		
Cheques issued			
Earl Haig Fund	Poppy donation		70.00
EHC	New Tennis Court Planning application		192.50
Wages and Salaries	December 2013		<u>1086.09</u>
			<u>1348.59</u>
Cheques received			
Allotment holders	3 Allotment rent 2013/14		53.00
			<u>53.00</u>
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Floodlighting donations 16.10.13 to 19.11.13	240.00	HCC – cleaning materials	<u>50.76</u>
Simon Nicholls – Main Hall and Pavilion	39.00		<u>50.76</u>
Paul Reid – Meeting room	12.00		
Helena Ivy – Meeting room	78.00		
Carla Beach – Pavilion and meeting room	<u>155.00</u>		
	<u>524.00</u>		
Cheques issued			
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials		29.80
Mark Blacktin	Repair safety surface with wet pour kit		100.00
Mark Blacktin	Replace and paint wooden parts on rainbow multi slide		660.00
Wages	December 2013		<u>356.50</u>
			<u>1146.30</u>

Cheques received

Rebecca Evans	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	40.00
Mrs. Endersbee	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	39.00
Katie Davies	Meeting room	18.00
Georgie Pay	Main Hall hire	386.10
School for Dots and Tots	Pavilion hire	183.60
School for Youth Drop Inn	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	167.40
Lisa Seal	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	<u>106.50</u>
		<u>940.60</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **Approval of minutes of Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2013**

Parish Councillors who attended the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 3rd December approved minutes.

The following recommendations were approved.

• **Hire charges**

The Community Hall hire-charges to remain the same gross amount (i.e. gross including VAT regardless of the percentage rate).

• **The Sports and Social Club hire-charge**

The Sports and Social Club hire-charge be increased from £2,800 to £2,900 per annum.

The Clerk to write to the Sports and Social Club accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Floodlighting charges**

The floodlighting charges remain at their current level of £1 for 10 minutes. However the charges to be reviewed by the Parish Council at its July 2014 meeting.

Agenda: 07/2014

• **Allotment rents**

The allotment rent remains the same at £20 per full allotment and £10 for one-half of an allotment.

Allotment water charges to be reviewed at the September Parish Council meeting, prior to the annual invoices going out on 1st October 2014.

Agenda: 09/2014

• **Self-employed remuneration**

The self-employed remuneration for Ted Brown, Rosemary Brown and Brian Thompson to be increased as per the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee minutes dated 3rd December.

• **Budget 2014/15**

Mr. Filer highlighted the main items listed in the Budget notes for the benefit of Mr. Knight and Ms. Waltham, who were not present at the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 3rd December.

Parish Councillors approved the budget figures.

• **Precept 2014/15**

It was agreed that the precept requirement for 2014/15 is £29,590. If the Parish Council is awarded a grant of £1,244 the precept request to East Herts Council will be reduced by this amount to £28,346.

The Clerk to contact East Herts Council to obtain confirmation that a grant of £1,244 will be payable to the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.

Action: J. Allsop

• **SLCC Annual membership**

The SLCC membership renewal is £129.00, a £2 increase from last year. Mr. Filer said that the membership provides the Parish Council with legal advice and useful information about changes in legislation, e.g. changes in accounting practices. Although this information is also available from the Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, their annual membership fee would be in the region of a thousand pounds.

Parish Councillors agreed to renew the SLCC membership.

Action: J. Allsop

• **British Gas – Gas contract**

Mr. Filer said that British Gas had written to offer a new gas contract for the Community Hall. As the Community Hall only agreed a new contract last year, which does not expire until April 2015, he instructed the Clerk to contact British Gas. The Clerk reported that British Gas said that the letter had been sent out in error and that they had also not applied the correct gas charges from April 2013 and therefore a rebate was due to the Community Hall.

Mr. Filer said that the reference numbers on the previous contract and the recent letter received from British Gas were the same; however, the current gas contract has a different reference number. However, the location references are all identical. Mr. Filer said that the same thing had happened to the War Memorial Hall gas providers, which are Scottish Power.

Community Hall Trustees

- **Child protection policy**
Mr. Harris was not present at the meeting and therefore it was agreed to defer discussion to the January Parish Council meeting. **Agenda: 01/2014**
- **Use of the kitchen by the Ladies football team**
Mr. Smith read out the letter he had sent to John Fitzjohn advising him that he could only use the kitchen facilities when the Pavilion is not in use by another hirer.
- **Repair to Rainbow multi play and slide**
Mr. Smith said that Mark Blacktin had done a good job of repairing the Rainbow multi play and slide's log ramp board and other wooden parts, including supply of materials, fitting and painting.
Mr. Smith said that he was also happy with the repair work he and Mark Blacktin did to the safety surface last month using a two-part repair system.
- **Installation of shelving in the internal cupboard**
Mark Blacktin has installed some shelving in the recently extended internal cupboard.
- **Estimate for external decoration of Community Hall**
Mr. Meischke is in the process of obtaining quotations for the external decoration work.
This item to remain on the agenda **Agenda: 01/2014**
- **Notice boards**
The internal notice boards have been relocated from the Pavilion into the main entrance corridor. The small settee in the pavilion has been moved and the table trolley is now stored in this area making the main area of the Pavilion uncluttered and more usable.
- **Alterations to meeting room**
To make additional space available to store buggies and prams in the meeting room, Mr. Smith and Mr. Meischke moved the contents of the filing cabinet into the filing cupboard. The filing cabinet was then relocated to the internal storeroom cupboard where it is being used to store equipment.
Mr. Smith said that he and the Clerk had started to go through the contents of the filing cupboard and there were several boxes of books ready to go up into the loft for storage. The filing cabinet will be moved down to the far end of the room in early 2014.
- **Request for quotations for installation of new boiler system**
Mr. Meischke is in the process of obtaining quotations for a new hot water boiler system.
This item to remain on the agenda **Agenda: 01/2014**
- **Pavilion floor**
Ms. Waltham said that the Pavilion floor is not very clean and wondered if it was in need of a professional clean.
It was agreed that to ask Mr. Meischke to speak to the cleaner. **Action: J. Allsop/J. Meischke**
The Clerk to find out when the Community Hall flooring last had a professional clean and who did the work. **Action: J. Allsop**

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **MPPA**
Mr. Knight said that the Tennis Club is affiliated to, and pays subs to, the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). The LTA in turn provides insurance cover for anyone using the MPPA facilities. It has done this for years. They have now advised the Tennis Club that there needs to be a sign on the courts which says 'In poor weather conditions, players use the courts at their own risk' or words to that effect!' If there is no sign, the insurance is invalid.
Parish Councillors agreed that Mr. Knight should erect a sign to validate the LTA insurance. **Action: I. Knight**
- **Sportsfield**
The sportsfield is currently looking very good considering the time of year.
Mr. Smith and Mr. Knight to review the condition of the sportsfield, and agree a schedule of maintenance, in March 2014. **Agenda: 03/14**

Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

Mr. Smith (Blue Bury Contractors) had done an excellent job of rotavating two allotment plots.

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had let three vacant allotment plots; one of these is to an existing allotment holder.

- **War Memorial**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the new planting that Mr. Stock did around the War Memorial is looking good.

Mrs. Dinnin said that as previously reported, the dead hedging shrub underneath the creeper was not removed because it would have looked very unsightly for the Remembrance Day service. She said that she would arrange for it to be removed and replacement planting purchased in the spring. In addition, more gravel stones are needed in the War Memorial flowerbeds. **Action: C. Dinnin**

It was agreed to remove the Poppy Wreaths around the War Memorial in early February unless weather conditions suggest that they be removed earlier. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Additional leaf collection**

Adam Welch was instructed to do an additional leaf collection following a complaint about fallen leaves in the pump slope area.

It was suggested that provided no objections were received from the Abel Smith Estate, improvements to the grass area around the village pump could be included in the S106 grant application.

b) Routine Reports

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

Mr. Smith and Mr. Stock carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests before the meeting.

- ii) **Monthly village-report**

Mrs. Dinnin completed the report on 16th December.

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

- **Noticeboards** - There are no District Councillor or County Councillor notices displayed on the Parish Council boards. The Clerk to obtain copies and put them on the notice boards. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **MPPA** – the insurance certificate for employers liability at the MPPA is faded and unreadable.

Mr. Knight to produce new certificates if required.

Action: I. Knight

Mr. Smith said that one of the Community Hall outside lights, on the sportsfield side, is not working.

He agreed to liaise with Mr. Meischke in having it repaired.

Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke

- iii) **Weekly sportsfield**

None.

- iv) **6-monthly check of MPPA, Play Area on sportsfield and Community Hall equipment**

- v) **Website**

Mr. Smith and Mr. Stock agreed to carry-out the 6-monthly check.

Action: M. Smith/D. Stock

- vi) **Website diary**

None.

- vii) **Highway and Lighting faults**

The Clerk to report the following fault.

- Street light outside number 4 Hazeldell is on all day.

Action: J. Allsop

10 Correspondence received

a) Copy of letters from Dr Anthony Norden of 10 School Lane to East Herts Council re proposed conservation area

Dr. Norden has copied the Parish Council in on a letter he, his wife (Lorraine Norden) and neighbour Norma Stapleton (3 Old School Orchard) sent to East Herts Council, on 6th December, concerning their objections to East Herts Council's proposal to remove the area adjacent to School Lane from the Conservation Area. In their opinion, this is a short-sighted proposal which is based on an incomplete understanding of this part of the Conservation Area.

The Clerk to e-mail all Parish Councillors a copy of this letter.

Action: J. Allsop

b) East Herts Rural Parish Conference 2014

Marianne McWhinnie (East Herts Council) e-mailed on 28th November as follows.

'We are in the early stages of planning the East Herts Rural Parish Conference for 2014.

I would like to invite you to help shape next year's agenda by putting forward suggestions or topics you would like to see presented or discussed on the day.

Also next year we are suggesting a change in the format to either

- a concentrated morning 9.30-1.30 finishing with a networking buffet lunch or
- late afternoon/early evening 4-8 finishing with buffet light supper.

Historically, the conference has been an all-day event and runs from 10am until 4pm with quite a few delegates leaving after the buffet lunch.

Please take time to circulate and discuss this e-mail and forward any ideas, comments and preferences with regards to timing of the conference to me by Friday 31st January 2014 and all suggestions will be taken into consideration.'

The Clerk to forwarded the above e-mail to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Smith said that he would consider the contents of this e-mail to ascertain if the Parish Council should make a response.

Action: M. Smith

c) **Cricket Club - funding for new equipment**

Mr. Smith said that the Cricket Club want to encourage younger players into the Club and therefore need to update some of their equipment which has come to end of life.

They have written to seek advice or help from the Parish Council re the funding of the following equipment.

- Roller £8020 (including delivery)
- Nets £1129
- Bowling machine £350

Mr. Smith said that the Cricket Club are applying for a grant from East Herts Council and could also apply for some of the funding available from the S106.

11 Village organisations

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

Mr Stock attended the War Memorial Hall Management Committee AGM on 20th November, which he summarised as follows.

- Bookings and finances remain in a healthy state.
- During the last 12 months various improvements to the building had been made, including the installation of many double-glazed windows.
- It is planned to fit new doors and complete the double-glazing of the remaining windows during 2014.
- The Trustees are happy with the efforts of the committee and thanked everyone involved.
- Helen McCash was re-elected as Chairman, as was Pam Filer as Treasurer and Ian Tyler as Secretary. The body of the committee remained unchanged and Mr. Stock agreed to continue as the Parish Council representative.
- The next AGM is to be held on 19th November 2014.

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

• **Watton Youth Drop Inn:** Nothing to report.

• **River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Knight asked for the Parish Council's approval to pay the annual grant donation of £25 to the River Beane Restoration Association to cover running costs.

After discussion, this payment was approved. The Clerk to arrange the payment.

Action: J. Allsop

• **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.

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

12 Items for Parish News

The following item was identified for inclusion in the February 2014 issue of the Parish News.

- East Herts Council public meeting re draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Watton-at-Stone.

Action: I. Knight/J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2117.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 21st January 2014.**