

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 20th May 2014 at 1919, following the annual meeting of the Parish Council

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

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mrs. Helen McCash.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 15th April 2014**
 Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

b) Review of actions

1. Chase Hertfordshire County Council re lighting invoices

The Clerk said she had spoken to Hertfordshire County Council re the lighting invoices and they had agreed to investigate. The Clerk to chase.

Action: J. Allsop

2. Complete online Child Protection Training: outstanding.

Action: J. Allsop

3. Ask Bob Thornton to write to the Parish Council requesting funding

Mrs. Dinnin said she had Bob Thornton's request for funding and agreed to pass it to the Clerk for payment.

Action: C. Dinnin

4. Renew ferreting licenses

Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Renewal of ferreting licences.

c) Action points resolved

1. **Update Planning Protocol as agreed** – Refer to item 6, Planning.
2. Send minutes on Traffic along Station Road and the High Street to Paul Chappell, Ken Crofton (County Councillor), Rik Sharma (District Councillor)
3. Remove old Parish Council notice board in Whempstead
4. Make changes to the draft District Plan petition notice
5. E-mail Parishioners who attended public meeting the amended petition notices
6. Write to District Councillors re draft District Plan
7. E-mail Ian Sharratt (East Herts Council) re S106 funding for Great Innings Play area
8. Present Summary of 12-monthly statement of accounts at Annual Parish Meeting
9. Renew CPRE annual membership
10. Renew CDA for Herts annual membership
11. Renew CVS for Broxbourne two-year membership
12. Change Community Hall asset register heading
13. Arrange for McCash to audit the Community Hall accounts
14. Purchase laminating machine
15. Get usage sign made for MPPA
16. Accept decoration quotation
17. Accept Bob Adams quotation to varnish the Ornate village sign
18. Renew Cottage site license
19. Liaise with Mrs. Dinnin re inspecting the benches in the village
20. Discuss with Mrs. Dinnin gravel stone area around the War Memorial
21. Arrange for the MPPA boundary fence to be tightened
22. Upload the updated planning protocol to the website
23. Join the Rural Services Network Sounding Board
24. Draft response to HCC re A602 improvements
25. Accept quotation from Stevenage Glass to repair 4 broken window panes
26. Write Parish News insert

6 Planning

Updated Planning Protocol

Mr. Stock's updated version (i.e. Edition 5) of the planning-protocol was formally adopted by the Parish Council at this meeting. Edition 5 has been uploaded to the Parish Council section of the Watton-at-Stone website.

Mr. Harris reported on the following items.

a) Applications

i) Heath Mount School (3/14/0721)

Erection of six replacement classrooms and performing arts space in The Dell for use in association with Heath Mount School.

This application is on land within the grounds of Heath Mount School and is not visible from the public highway. Mr. Harris said he sort the approval of Mr. Knight and Ms. Waltham to make a 'No comment' response and the Clerk was instructed to respond to the planning department accordingly.

ii) Heath Mount School (3/14/0676/LB) – Listed Building consent

Internal alterations - removal of dividing screens to two principal rooms to ground floor to return rooms to their original form including making good works

Mr. Harris said that the Parish Council's protocol did not cover listed building consent so no response/action is required re this application.

b) Decisions

i) 120 Hazeldell (3/14/0478/FP)

Part single and two storey rear extension. Replacement pitched roof at the front

-East Herts Council permission granted

ii) 54 Great Innings North (3/14/0339/FP)

Garage conversion and single storey rear extension

-East Herts Council permission granted

iii) 67 Hazeldell (3/14/0479/FP)

Single Storey Front Extension

-East Herts Council permission granted

iv) 4 Newmans Court (3/14/0454/FP)

Conversion of existing garage to study and minor internal alterations.

-East Herts Council permission granted

7 Specific items

• Traffic along Station Road and the High Street

As agreed at the April Parish Council meeting, the Clerk e-mailed a copy of the April minutes concerning traffic problems along Station Road to the Highways Department at Hertfordshire County Council.

There was also much frustration expressed about the lack of response from the Highways Department to our requests for action to improve pedestrian safety in Station Road.

Parish Councillors expressed their concern about the apparent new and increasing on-street parking problem on the stretch of Station Road adjacent to the Gatekeeper Meadow development. Much of this on-street parking is close to the railway bridge and the ticket office, and is therefore obviously giving concerns about traffic and pedestrian movements in that area. On-street parking close to the bridge causes visibility problems for traffic entering and leaving the village.

Mr. Stock proposed that we write to Ken Crofton (our County Councillor), with a copy to the Highways Department and Oliver Heald- MP, requesting that a site meeting be arranged between the interested parties so that this long-standing issue can be resolved without further delays and before the current 106-funding disappears. After discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Smith and Mr. Stock formally write to Ken Crofton accordingly and say that 'briefing note' copies of relevant parts of our Parish Council minutes can be made available if required.

Action: M. Smith/D. Stock

• Parish Council response to the Draft District Plan

Following the extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council, held on Tuesday 13th May, to discuss the Parish Council's response to the draft District plan, Mr. Smith agreed to e-mail all Parish Councillors a revised response based on the discussions that took place and in liaison with Richard Aston.

Mr. Smith e-mailed the revised response to the draft District Plan to all Parish Councillors on 16th May. Parish Councillors formally approved the response and agreed to write to East Herts Council accordingly.

Action: M. Smith

A copy of the Parish Council's response is attached to these minutes.

See attached

• Installation of new play equipment on the Sportsfield

Installation of the new play equipment was due to start this week. However, the work has been delayed and a new start date has not yet been given.

• **Signing of the new sportsfield extension lease**

Parish Councillors agreed that Mr. Smith and Mr. Meischke should sign the new lease and return it to Debenhams Ottoway with our payment, following receipt of their VAT invoice.

• **Parish Council notices boards**

Mr. Smith said that he acquired two notice boards (approximately 1.5 meters by 1 meter) from Watton-at-Stone School. He refurbished both notice boards, including fitting new Perspex, installing new locks and Velcro friendly green backing and making them watertight. Mark Blacktin and Mr. Smith installed one of the notice boards by the village shop. The old Parish Council notice board has been donated to the Parish Church. The other notice board has been installed at the Community Hall and the original board removed so it can have new Perspex fitted. Once repaired, it will be relocated to either Station Road or replace the existing board adjacent to the Great Innings roundabout. Mr. Smith to arrange for new Perspex to be fitted. **Action: M. Smith**

8 Sub-Committees

a) 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			
Jane Allsop	April salary and home office allowance		847.03
CDA for Herts	Annual subscription		30.00
CPRE for Herts	Annual subscription		30.00
Ted Brown	Weed killing		20.00
Ted Brown	Strimming and mowing		80.00
Ted Brown	Litterpicking		259.20
Jane Allsop	33 x 2 nd class stamps		17.49
HCC	Stationery		10.68
Ted Brown	Weeding, mowing and community hall garden		90.00
Mark Blacktin	Install post and 3 notice boards		135.00
			1519.40
Cheques received			
None			

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Carla Beach – Pavilion and meeting room	164.50	None	
Vicki Roos – Meeting room	78.00		
Vince Geoff – various facilities	29.00		
Emily Reed	64.00		
Georgie Pay – April – June – Main Hall	386.10		
	721.60		
Cheques issued			
Mark Blacktin	Repair of vandalised damage to safety surface		160.00
CVS for Broxbourne	2-year membership subscription		30.00
Rosemary Brown	21 hours cleaning at £7.85 per hour		368.95
Total Contract Cleaners	Deep cleaning all rooms in the Community Hall		225.00
Mark Blacktin	Repair to damaged equipment, fix window frame		50.00
			833.95
Cheques received			
Mrs. Sinfield	Main Hall and Pavilion		52.00
Badminton Club	Main Hall and Pavilion		135.00
Mrs. Stichbury	Main Hall and Pavilion		45.50
Mr. Jones	Main Hall and Pavilion		48.00
Mrs. Parker	Main Hall and Pavilion		45.50
Mrs. Jeffrey	Pavilion		28.00
Peter Khera	Main Hall		108.00
Paula Sutton	Main Hall		114.40
			576.40

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **Report from Mr. Morrissey on the Internal Audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 2013/14**

Mr. Filer read out the following letter (dated 22nd April) from Jim Morrissey.

‘As requested I have carried out my review of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 and can advise that all transactions have been correctly and accurately recorded. All necessary receipts and authorisations have also been produced.

Although the budget predicted a ‘nil’ net movement in reserves for the year, due to some exceptional items being incurred in the year, a net increase in reserves of £9579 occurred.

The exceptional items were as follows (net of VAT in brackets)

Costs:

Supernova on Grass Mats	£4933	(net of VAT £4111)
Samsung Computer plus printer	£923	(net of VAT £ 774)

Income

EHDC - New homes bonus	£3327	
Donations/Grants (primarily for Playground)	£6254	
VAT refunds – 2 years received in year	£4228	(£1000 per budget)

The Parish Council's bank + Petty Cash balances as at 31/3/2014 were £13103 an increase of £9579 plus refund due for 2013/14 VAT amounting to £2019.

I trust the above is sufficient for your purposes but should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.’

• **Annual Return of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014**

Mr. Filer took the Parish Council through the annual governance statement and the standard questions were answered as follows.

Section 2 – Annual governance statement	
We acknowledge as members of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 st March 2014 that,	
1. We have approved the accounting statements, which have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and proper practices.	Yes
2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Yes
3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice which could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the council to conduct its business or on its finances.	Yes
4. We have provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ right in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes
5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Yes
6. We have maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems and carried out a review of its effectiveness.	Yes
7. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	Yes
8. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the council and, where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.	Yes
9. Trust funds (including charitable) – in our capacity as the sole managing trustee we have discharged our responsibility in relation to the accountability for the fund(s)/assets	N/A

Mr. Filer proposed that the accounts, detailed in section one, and the Annual governance statement detailed in section two (listed above) of the Annual Return, be approved by the Parish Council and that the

Chairman and the Clerk sign the Annual Return. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Smith and the Clerk duly signed the Annual Return and the Statement of Assurance.

The Clerk to return all relevant documentation to BDO by Wednesday 28th May 2013. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **McCash and Hay report on external audit of Community Hall accounts for the year ended 2013/14**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed (on 19th May) a copy of the audited Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014. Parish Councillors approved the audited Community Hall accounts.

A short discussion took place on who was responsible for signing the accounts, the Chairman of the Parish Council or the Chairman of the Trustees. It was agreed that they should both sign the audited Community Hall accounts.

The Clerk to send the signed copy of the accounts to McCash and Hay and request that they sign the bound copy of the accounts and return it to the Parish Council. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Parish Council insurance**

Aon Limited has sent the insurance renewal papers for the Parish Council. The Premium for 2014/15 is £754.03, which is slightly higher than in 2013/14.

The Clerk will arrange to pay AON Limited before the insurance renewal date of 1st June.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Harris and Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **External decoration work at the Community Hall**

Devine Decoration Services hope to start the external decoration work at the end of May/beginning of June.

- **Professional cleaning**

Mr. Meischke said that Total Contract Cleaners did an excellent job with the professional deep clean at the Community Hall. They have quoted £35 for cleaning the Community Hall (per visit) on a regular basis.

It was agreed that it would be more cost effective to use this service on a Monday morning and have our current cleaners attend to the remainder of the work during the week.

After discussion, Mr. Meischke agreed to speak to both the cleaners regarding their current hours.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Window cleaning**

It was agreed that if Total Contract Cleaners are employed to clean the hall on a weekly basis, then window cleaning would be added to their schedule.

- **Disabled car park sign**

Mr. Meischke said that the cost of the paint required a disabled sign marked on the car park tarmac is approximately £60. Mr. Knight suggested that the sportsfield line-marking paint be used. He said there are currently two tins of this paint down at the Community Hall. Although, it probably will not last as long as specialised paint for tarmac, Mr. Knight said that the paint from a spillage he had two years ago is still very evident.

Mr. Meischke agreed to ask Mark Blacktin to use the line-marking paint to make the disabled sign on the car park tarmac.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Repair of four broken window panes**

Stevenage Glass have replaced the four broken windows.

- **Replacement Pavilion window frames**

Mr. Meischke said that he is waiting for Trevor Blacktin to come back to him regarding options for replacing the pavilion windows.

- **Stone name plaques for The Nigel Poulton Community Hall**

Mr. Meischke said that he had investigated the cost of a limestone plaque with the wording 'The Nigel Poulton Community Hall'. The estimate he obtained is for a three bricks high plaque. After discussion, it was agreed that more quotations need to be obtained to include the use of alternative materials.

Action: J. Meischke

Parish Councillors agreed that it was important that a good quality and lasting material be used on at least the main entrance side of the building.

ii) **Monthly village-report**

Mr. Stock completed the report on 16th May 2014.

He then commented on the following items from his report that he felt needed attention.

- **MPPA fence** - He felt that this subject needed to be discussed by the Community Hall Board of Trustees during its meeting scheduled for 8th July 2014. **Agenda: Trustees 07/14**
 - **Rainbow slide** - patches of grass are growing through the safety-surface and this may lead to problems. **Agenda: Trustees 07/14**
 - **Notice at MPPA** - Mr. Stock was unhappy about the 'own risk' notice and suggested that it be reworded. Mr. Knight said that this notice board is due to be replaced.
 - **War memorial** - Further to earlier discussions between Mr. Stock and Mrs. Dinnin, they both had a site meeting and agreed that work is required to improve the overall state of the War Memorial garden. They proposed that the whole site needs to be weed-treated and scrubbed-out where necessary. After this has been done additional stones need to be purchased and laid to cover all exposed areas of soil. Some new planting will also be required later in the year.
Adam Welch has quoted £90 to do the work, excluding materials, Parish Councillors agreed to accept this quote. **Action: C. Dinnin**
- For budgetary purposes, the cost of materials (i.e. weed-killer, two one-ton bags of stones and new shrubs) would be in the region of £170.
- Mrs. Dinnin and Mr. Stock to progress this item to completion. **Action: C. Dinnin/D. Stock**
- **Mill Pond** - This is full of what appeared to be builders' rubble. Similar was noted in the culvert.
 - **Parish Council land at Rivershill** - Mr. Meischke said that a tree from Abel Smith land has fallen onto the Parish Council land at Rivershill. Mr. Smith agreed to contact the Abel Smith estate accordingly. **Action: M. Smith**

iii) **Weekly sportsfield**

Nothing to report.

v) **Website**

The Clerk to upload the Parish Council's response to the Draft District Plan.

Action: J. Allsop

vi) **Website Diary**

As the website diary is currently not in use by Parish Councillors, this item to be removed from the agenda.

Action: J. Allsop

vii) **Highway and Lighting faults**

None.

9 Correspondence received

a) **Brenda Marshall and Sharon Wilson re dogs on the Lammas**

E-mails have been received from Brenda Marshall and Sharon Wilson concerning dogs walkers on the Lammas that allow their animals to go into the River Beane and over into gardens on the opposite bank. This has caused some upset to residents.

Parish Councillors noted the concerns of Brenda Marshall and Sharon Wilson; however, they could not see how they could prevent this from occurring. The only way homeowners, whose gardens back onto the river, can prevent dogs entering their gardens is by fencing the area.

The Clerk to write to Brenda Marshall and Sharon Wilson accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

b) **Stevenage Community Trust re volunteer worker**

Stevenage Community Trust e-mailed on 14th May to ask if the Parish Council had any jobs in the Parish as a local firm has 20-30 volunteers available for a one-day event. The Clerk e-mailed back various jobs within the village; however, Stevenage Community Trust have not responded.

c) **Ian Sharratt (East Herts Council) re improvements to the Great Innings Play Area**

Ian Sharratt e-mailed on the 9th May expressing his thanks for the Parish Council's support of the proposed improvements planned for the Great Innings Play Area using S106 funding for the village.

The Clerk to forward Ian Sharratt's e-mail to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

d) **Darren Granger (HCC, Highways) re A602 improvements**

Mr. Meischke drafted the following letter in response to the proposals to improve the A602, which the Clerk then e-mailed to HCC.

'Watton-at-Stone Parish Council would like to make the following comments on the proposed A602 improvements-scheme.

We think the improvements you have proposed are in general good and are badly needed to improve the traffic-flow problems in the area.

We only have two main areas of concern.

- 1) The traffic turning into Heath Mount School causes major hold-ups for traffic towards Ware in the mornings. Will, we wonder, making a middle lane for a right-turn into Heath Mount solve the problem?
 - a) It puts those in the middle lane in direct conflict with on-coming traffic.
 - b) Will the length of this additional lane be sufficient to accommodate enough vehicles to make a difference to the traffic flow?
- 2) Our second area of concern is the A602/A119 roundabout.
 - a) Would it be possible to have a feeder-lane for traffic from Hertford turning left into Watton-at-Stone? Currently the significant traffic-flow into the village from this direction is held-up by traffic crossing the roundabout towards Stevenage or turning right towards Ware.
 - b) A system of green lights allowing a left-turn into Watton-at-Stone and a right-turn from Ware to Stevenage on a higher percentage may also help.

Mr. Darren Granger e-mailed on 13th May as follows.

‘Thank you for your e:mail and attached letter dated 9th May.

I welcome the support and feedback from the Parish Council, and will discuss the points of concern that have been raised with our designers who have been developing the technical details of the scheme.

Once I have concluded these discussions I will ensure that you receive a more detailed reply within the next 10 days, however in the meantime if you have any further queries please contact me.’

e) The Local Government Boundary Commission – electoral review of Hertfordshire

The Parish Council agreed not to comment on the electoral review of Hertfordshire.

10 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 the Watton Youth Drop Inn are considering changing their club night to Friday evenings. This is because the school have noted that some of the children attending on Wednesday evenings are disruptive on Thursday and quarrels that occurred on the previous evening are continued in school.

- **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:** Nothing to report.

- **Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup**

Mrs. Dinnin reported that the new building work at the school is on schedule and the Pre-School Playgroup hope to move into their new premises in September 2014.

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

- **Police Authority**

Mr. Smith read out a policing report (e-mailed on 20th May) from Sergeant Duncan Wallace.

Parish Councillors noted the contents but were concerned and alarmed by the comment that domestic incidents are recorded as non-criminal.

It was agreed to e-mail Sergeant Wallace with the Parish Council’s concern.

Action: J. Allsop

11 Items for Parish News

The following items were identified for inclusion in the June 2014 issue of the Parish News.

- The Annual Parish reports and summarised accounts.
- Draft District plan.

Action: I. Knight/J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2130.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 17th June 2014.**