

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 19th May 2015

Present:

Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. Denis Filer	Mr. Ian Knight
Mrs. Helen McCash	Mrs. Margaret Stanley
Mr. David Stock	Dr. Emma Waltham
Mrs. Jane Allsop (Clerk)	

Members of public: District Councillor Mike Freeman and County Councillor Ken Crofton

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mrs. Christine Dinnin.

2 Public Participation

Mr. Smith welcomed County Councillor Ken Crofton and our new District Councillor Mike Freeman to the Meeting.

Mike Freeman said that as a District Councillor he is stuck between Government and the Parish Council/local people. With regard to future development, he thought it would be useful to set out the facts regarding the District Plan to village residents via the Parish News and had originally intended that he and the Parish Council make a joint statement. However, it had now been agreed that separate statements should be issued. Mr. Smith e-mailed a copy of the draft statement he intended to put in the Parish News on behalf of the Parish Council to all Parish Councillors on 17th May and as a result minor changes were made.

Mike Freeman said that a petition had appeared in the village shop and it stated that East Herts Council is paying to have the green-belt land around Watton-at-Stone assessed. This statement is not true; it is for the whole of East Herts, not just Watton-at-Stone. Although the petition has now been amended, the statement therein is still not wholly accurate.

Parish Councillors then discussed in general terms the effects the District Plan could have on the village and how best to plan for this. Mike Freeman and Ken Crofton assisted the Parish Council in their discussions.

Although the Parish Council continues to strongly object to the loss of local green-belt land, Mr. Smith felt it was important that the Parish Council stay ahead of the situation regarding the District Plan and the additional housing requirements for Watton-at-Stone, and should therefore find out as much as they could about setting-up a Neighbourhood Plan in readiness should the need arise. Standon Parish Council has offered advice to any Parish needing assistance in this matter. Mr. Smith said that as soon as the Parish Council lodges an application for a Neighbourhood Plan with East Herts Council, they will be agreeing that more development is needed in their area and therefore should be very careful not to commit to this until the need arises.

Mike Freeman said that he will totally support the Parish Council in whatever way they want to proceed.

It was agreed that an additional paragraph be added to the Parish Council's District Plan statement, for the Parish News, declaring that it is now working towards establishing a Neighbourhood Plan and asking that anyone interested in becoming involved in this, especially those with organisational and business skills, to contact the Parish Council.

Action: M. Smith

- **Dog fouling**

Mike Freeman had received complaints from residents (and in particular from our Litterpick person) about dog-waste being put in the litterbins. He said that Rosemary Brown (with the assistance of the Clerk), had put up notices on some of the litterbins near the sportsfield. Although it is not an offence to put dog-waste bags in litterbins, it is an unsociable thing to do. He suggested that the Parish Council produce some formal notices asking residents to use the dog-waste bins provided. The Parish Council agreed to invite the East Herts Council Dog Warden to visit the village to discuss the problem with Parish Councillors. The possibility of Parish Council notices on the litterbins to be discussed with the Dog Warden. Dr. Waltham suggested that the Dog Warden could also be invited to visit the school to educate the children re the disposal of dog-waste. She agreed to speak to the school about this option. **Action: J. Allsop/E. Waltham**

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

- **A602 improvement consultation exhibition**

Mr. Smith said that he attended a public consultation exhibition re the proposed improvements for the A602 along with Mr. Meischke, Mr. Stock, Mr. Knight and Dr. Waltham on Saturday 16th May at the Scout Hut (Mill Lane).

Refer to item 7 e, Specific items -A602 improvements meeting.

4 Declaration of Interests

Mr. Filer declared a personal interest in item 6 a i, Planning application - Builders Yard, Perrywood Lane (Mr. Filer's daughter owns a small plot of land within the builders yard).

Mr. Smith declared a personal interest in item 6 a ii, Planning application - Ballacraine, Walkern Road (Mr. Smith lives adjacent to the planning application site).

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st April 2015**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved.

b) Review of actions

1. Contact HCC asking them re reinstate the Station Car Park sign in Station Road

The Clerk said that she e-mailed Chris Simpson (Senior Engineer, Development Management, HCC) asking him to arrange for the Station Car Park sign to be reinstated in Station Road. He in turn e-mailed Malcolm Nicholls (Barratt Homes) on 22nd April as follows.

s.278 & s.38 Clappers Lane (Land south of Station Road), Wotton at Stone

Thank you again for meeting me on site. There is a station car park sign that will require replacement as part of the scheme (see Street View extract attached).

The Clerk to chase.

Action: J. Allsop

2. Contact all existing ferreting license holders

The Clerk said that she had only recently written to the ferreting license holders.

This item remain on the agenda.

Agenda: 06/15

3. Contact East Herts Council re ownership of drain that runs across the sportsfield

The Clerk said that Chris Kitts (East Herts Council) informed her that they are no longer responsible for sewage and it is now the responsibility of Thames Water, who need to be asked to put cameras down the drain that runs across the sportsfield to ascertain its condition. Property owners are only responsible for the sewer pipes up to their boundary, after that point it is the responsibility of Thames Water.

It was agreed to write to Thames Water accordingly.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

Mr. Kitts informed that Clerk that he is happy to give Thames Water any history they require regarding this drain.

4. E-mail the Clerk any changes required to the Asset Registers

Mr. Filer said that he had only received comments from Mr. Meischke re changes to the Asset Register.

Agenda: B&F

A meeting of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee is required to discuss this item. Refer to item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee – meeting date.

5. Revise the Asset values where required and e-mail them to Parish Councillors

Refer to the above item.

7. Formally resign from the Community Hall Board of Trustees

Mr. Harris has resigned, in writing, from the Community Hall Board of Trustees.

8. Investigate the cost of large litterbins for the sportsfield

Mr. Smith said that Mrs. Dinnin had investigated the costs of large surface mounts litterbins. He said his personal favourite had a liner tray/bait box area at the bottom of the bin, which would be ideally located near the swings. This bin costs £330 plus anchor kit. A similar style bin without the liner tray/bait box area costs £230.

Because of the problems experienced with vermin near the play area, it was agreed to purchase the litterbin with the bate station.

Action: J. Allsop

There are currently two small litterbins in the storeroom at the Community Hal. It was agreed to install one of these bins at the back of the existing litterbin by on the sportsfield side of the car park.

Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke

c) Action points resolved

1. Accept Mark Blacktin's quotation to fit brackets on Church Walk bench
2. Contact Barratt Homes re trees along Station Road outside Gatekeeper Meadow
3. Accept Mark Blacktin's quotation to repair the Rainbow multi-play and slide
4. Chase Ted Brown re leaf clearance required on the MPPA
5. Chase Ted Brown re cleaning the seat between the two conifer trees on the sportsfield
6. Accept Adam Welch's quotation re hedge cutting at the entrance to the Allotments
7. Contact Ben Biggin (HCC) about the on-street parking problem in Station Road
8. E-mail all Parish Councillors a copy of the letter sent in response to the Bus service consultation
9. Renew license across Cottage site

10. Renew CDA membership
11. Accept Mark Blacktin's quotation to install the seat donated by Kompan
12. Write to all allotment holders
13. Turf the goalmouth areas after the last football match has been played

d) Items outstanding for more than two months

1. Arrange for the MPPA fence to be repaired: outstanding.

Mr. Smith said that the current fencing is reparable but would need to be replaced in a few years. He said that he liked the style of chain link fencing used at the new Beane Valley centre and school site.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Filer to put some money in reserves for renewing the MPPA fencing. **Action: D. Filer**

2. Chase HCC re lighting charges

The Clerk reported that Dan Perks (Highways Operational Officer, Environment & Commercial Services Department at HCC) e-mailed on 27th April as follows.

'Sorry for the delay.

I have discussed this with colleagues and it does appear that there has been an oversight on our behalf which has meant you have not been invoiced since 2012. With that in mind I have agreed with the budget holder for energy payments that we will not be invoicing you for 2012/13 or 2013/2014 but will invoice you for 2014/2015 and then once a year going forward.

Apologies for this omission.'

6 Planning

Mr. Stock reported on the following items.

a) Applications

i) Builders Yard, Perrywood Lane (3/15/0719/FUL)

Demolition of existing asbestos-sheeted storage building and replacement with two detached houses with integral garages and associated landscaping works

Mr. Filer visited the two neighbours that border the site involved.

Because of Mr. Filer's subsequent Declaration of Interest, he took no part in the discussions and Mr. Stock reported the views of the neighbours. Although they are happy in principal with this planning application they would like the whole site to be developed at the same time and with a maximum of four dwellings overall. (Note it was because of this desire that Mr. Filer had to declare an interest.)

Although the Parish Council understood and appreciated the views of the neighbours, it was decided that we can only comment on the application put before us. After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed to write in support of this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Stock suggested that Mr. Filer contact the two neighbours and encourage them to write to the planning department (if they have not yet done so) to make their views known.

ii) Ballacraine, Walkern Road (3/15/0847/FUL)

Erection of a detached bungalow following demolition of the existing commercial buildings

The Parish Council supported the previous application (which was refused by East Herts Council) for the erection of a dwelling in 2011 because the site was very unattractive at the time and was much in need of improvement. However, the application was refused by East Herts Council.

Although the site remains in an unattractive state it was felt that our strong objections to the development of green-belt in general gave us little choice but to object to this new application. This followed much discussion about the fact that some green-belt sites extend into brown-field areas and the proposed development appears to fall into this category.

Parish Councillors agreed that although the proposed development would not spoil the openness of the area, this did not change our strong views on the loss of green-belt land.

Mr. Stock proposed that the Parish Council respond to East Herts Council as follows.

'Because of our strong objections to current threats to use Green-Belt land to further develop Watton-at-Stone we have no option but to object to this application; notwithstanding the fact that it would much improve the appearance of the site.'

Mrs. McCash seconded Mr. Stock's proposal and all Parish Councillors were in favour.

Action: J. Allsop/D. Stock

b) Decisions

None

7 Specific items

a) Traffic along Station Road

Mr. Stock said that he had had a number of e-mail exchanges with Ben Biggins (Principal Engineer, HCC) concerning the on-street parking in Station Road adjacent to the Gatekeeper Meadow development. One of these e-mails gave a rough indication of HCC's current thoughts on possible solutions and was presented under the headings of 'Do minimum', 'Mid case' and 'Do maximum'. However, without the aid of drawings or sketches (which HCC was not prepared to give us at this stage) it was not easy to fully understand the significance of or visualise the three options.

Mr. Stock had that he had his own views (including dismay that it appeared that some of our concerns were not being addressed) on the three options given to us but wanted to ensure that when he responds to HCC he could be assured that he was representing the views of the whole Parish Council at this critical stage. To this end he is to immediately send a copy of HCC's e-mail to all Parish Councillors for their comment. **Action: D. Stock**

Mr. Smith asked all Parish Councillors to give Mr. Stock their comments by this Friday.

Action: All Parish Councillors

Mr. Stock to prepare our response (i.e. feedback) accordingly and e-mail it to Ben Biggin before 2nd June; bearing in mind that we are scheduled to have a site meeting with HCC during mid-June to 'walk through' their proposals. **Action: D. Stock**

• Traffic along the High Street

Mr. Stock felt that because Mr. Harris was no longer a Parish Councillor we needed someone else, as part of the delegation of tasks, to join Mrs. Stanley in leading our attempts to get the problems in Station Road resolved. Mrs. McCash said she would do this as working in the High Street gives her first-hand experience of the issues involved on a daily basis.

To date no response has been received from Dave Burt-HCC re Mrs. Stanley's report (e-mailed on 22nd January) summarising the traffic problems in the High Street. The Clerk to chase. **Action: J. Allsop**

There is some concern about the possible effect on congestion in the High Street if there was to be an increase in uninterrupted traffic-flow into the village due to the A602 improvement programme. Refer to 4(e) A602 improvements meeting.

b) Sewage spill adjacent to Community Hall

Refer to item 7 a, Community Hall Trustees.

c) Co-option of a Parish Councillors

The Clerk said that she had spoken to Jeff Hughes (East Herts Council) re the Parish Council's need to co-opt an addition member due to Adam Welch deciding that it was not in his best interest to sign the declaration of acceptance of office as a Parish Councillor. Mr. Hughes said that he would have to check the regulations for this, as he had not experienced it before. However, it was likely to be the same as a councillor resigning, which requires an official notice from East Herts Council (which have to be placed on the notice boards in the village) stating that a vacancy now exists. An election to fill the vacancy would need to be held if requested in writing by ten local government electors (from the electoral area). If no election is requested, then the vacancy can be filled by the Parish Council co-opting a member.

The Clerk to wait for Jeff Hughes instructions and act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

d) Green-Belt

Mr. Smith said that some discussions have already taken place re the Green-Belt under item 2 Public Participation.

Mr. Smith said that Government attaches great importance to the Green-Belts. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. However planning rules can tinker with the Green-Belt and allow some development in these areas.

Mr. Smith e-mailed all Parish Councillors a copy of the Barker Review report. He said if you refer to page 4 of this report, it outlines that the shortfall of homes over the last decade now stands at an estimated 953,000 homes plus a backlog of an estimated 93,000 to 146,000 from the year 2004.

e) A602 improvements meeting

Refer to item 3, Chairman's/Clerk's Report.

Mr. Meischke said that the proposed road-junction changes would be a huge improvement to most of the current ones. Also a new section of road is to be built starting just after the Bardolphs Farm turn off on the Ware Road and ending just after the Sacombe Farm junction. However, this does not properly address the Heath Mount turn-off problem. The proposals show an increase in the central reservation waiting-area from 2/3 car lengths to 6/8 car lengths, without any additional protection to cars making this right-hand turn into Heath Mount school. Mr. Meischke suggested to Chris Wilkinson (Senior Engineer, Major Projects Group, HCC), who was running the public consultation exhibition on 16th July, that the existing section of road could be used as an access only road to Heath Mount school, by making the Whempstead Road turn off into a roundabout.

The Watton-at-Stone – to - Ware roundabout is going to have a designated lane for traffic going from Stevenage to Ware. In addition, a filter lane for traffic from Hertford to Watton-at-Stone will be included at this roundabout. Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock both felt, and made the point to Chris Wilkinson-HCC, that the uncontrolled filter-lane is a very welcome improvement but its possible impact on the traffic flow in the High Street needed to be addressed at the same time, i.e. action needs to be taken to address the current problems of congestion because these could well be made worse by a possible increased flow of uninterrupted traffic coming into the village from this roundabout. They were both of the opinion that we needed to meet with Chris Wilkinson to discuss this aspect further and in the hope that we can get some assistance from the programme to address this knock-on effect of the improvements to the A602. This was agreed and Chris Wilkinson to be contacted to arrange an early meeting accordingly (Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock are happy to attend).

Action: M. Stanley

f) Contents list for the ‘Parish Council Toolkit’ folder

Mr. Smith suggested that the contents of the Parish Council toolkit folder could be put on-line. The Clerk said that a special link to the www.watton-pc.org.uk site could allow Parish Councillors to access all the files currently contained in the toolkit folder. This area of the website could also have password access.

Parish Councillors agreed that the documents should be uploaded to a special section of the website without a password access.

Action: J. Allsop

Any Parish Council wishing to retain their folder should pass it to the Clerk for updating.

Action: Parish Councillors

Mrs. Stanley and the Clerk are working on a contents list that will be added to the toolkit folder and also form the front page of the new section of the website.

Action: M. Stanley/J. Allsop

g) Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Mr. Smith said that to put together a Neighbourhood Plan requires a dedicated and committed team of people with good organisational skills. East Herts Council has a good Neighbourhood Plan pack which the Parish Council would need to familiarise themselves with before agreeing to committing to its own Neighbourhood Plan. The pack includes a list of people to contact, the timescales involved and how the process works.

Mr. Smith suggested that the Parish Council obtains several copies of the plan and these be circulated between Parish Councillors. This was agreed. Mr. Smith to contact East Herts Council to arrange a meeting with the person who deals with the setting-up Neighbourhood Plans so the process can be explained to him.

Action: M. Smith

The subject of a Neighbourhood Plan to be put on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting in September.

Agenda: M. Smith

Mr. Smith said that if East Herts Council come forward with a Green-Belt release for Watton-at-Stone in November, it would probably be 6 months before it is implemented.

As soon as the Parish Council can view of the deposit plan, they have 14-days to respond to it and comments will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate with the District Plan (which remains unaltered).

8 Sub-Committees

a) Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items concerning the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash – Payments	
None		None	
Cheques issued			
Ted Brown	32 hours x £8.20		262.40
Rosemary Brown	Clean seat on sportsfield		10.00
Ted Brown	Pruning, mowing and weeding		90.00
Ted Brown	Weed killing		35.00
J. Allsop	April salary and office allowance		868.81
Adam Welch	Prune hedge behind Glebe Court and strim area		80.00
Frank Cooper and Son	1 grass cut		69.60
CDA FOR Herts	Annual Subscription		30.00
Mark Blacktin	fit Bracket to Church Walk bench		60.00
Mark Blacktin	Concrete base and fit new bench donated by Kompan		297.00
Community Hall	1/2 year grant		3,010.00
			<u>4,812.81</u>
Cheques received			
None			

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash –Payments	
Carla Beach – Pavilion	128.25	Pound Land – bathroom cleaner	<u>2.00</u>
Vince Geoff - Main Hall	104.00	David Bunyan – clear blocked toilet	<u>72.00</u>
Vicki Roos – Meeting room	84.00		<u>74.00</u>
Cassie Rason – Main Hall	172.35		
Floodlighting to 21/04/15	60.00		
	<u>548.60</u>		
Cheques issued			
Rosemary Brown	22.5 hours cleaning @ £7.95 per hour		178.88
Total Contract Cleaners	Cleaning on 2 nd , 9th, 16th and 23 rd and 30 th March		120.00
Affinity Water	Water supply		56.09
Mark Blacktin	Repair to multi slide equipment		258.00
Mark Blacktin	Pressure washing footpath by Community Hall re sewage spill		95.00
British Gas	Gas supply to end of contract		1,165.32
John Phillips	Toilet opening - 01/01/15 to 30/04/15		120.00
British Gas	Electricity supply to end of contract		446.74
McCash and Hay	Annual audit		132.00
			<u>2,572.03</u>
Cheques received			
Dave Boddy	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		306.00
Peter Khera - Karate	Main Hall		163.80
Parish Council	1/2 year grant		<u>3,010.00</u>
			<u>3,479.80</u>
Cheque returned – see petty cash entry			
Cassie Rason	Main Hall		<u>238.50</u>

Parish Councillors agreed the payments.

• **Annual Return of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015**

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 27th May 2015. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **McCash and Hay report on external audit of Community Hall accounts for the year ended 2013/15**
All Parish Councillors were e-mailed (on 15th May) a copy of the audited Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015. Parish Councillors approved the audited Community Hall accounts and Mr. Smith signed one copy of the accounts.

The Clerk to give the signed copy of the accounts to McCash and Hay. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Parish Council insurance**
Mr. Filer said that the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee will need to meet before 1st June to discuss the Parish Council insurance renewal. **Agenda: B&F**

- **Bank account signatories**
This item to be discussed at the next meeting of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee. **Agenda: B&F**

- **Meeting date**
A meeting of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee will take place on Wednesday 27th at 14:00. The Parish Council authorised the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee to make decisions regarding the following items.

- Insurance
- Asset register
- Bank signatories

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Community Hall Trustees.

- **Replacement wall of windows and doors**
A deposit payment of £4,200 plus VAT has been made to SJM (Stanley J Murphy Limited) towards the cost of the installation of the new wall of windows and doors. The work is expected to be carried-out in August, which will cause minimal disruption to Community Hall hirers.
- **Lights**
Mr. Meischke has altered all the timers for the external lights to British Summer time.
- **Cleaning**
Mr. Meischke said that he asked Total Contract Cleaners to do some additional cleaning duties including clearing the cobwebs high up in the Main Hall.
- **Jet washing path**
Although Thames water cleaned the footpath around the Community Hall following the sewage leak, further work was required. Mark Blacktin has pressured washed the area for £95.
- **Door mats**
Both the doormats at the Community Hall entrances need replacing. However, the mat at the changing room end needs to be replaced as soon as possible as it has a hole in it, which is a potential trip hazard.
Mr. Meischke agreed to obtain quotations for one replacement mat. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **External decoration.**
Some of the low-level external windows need repainting, in particular the meeting room windows.
Mr. Meischke to obtain quotations. **Action: J. Meischke**
Mr. Meischke said that Total Contract Cleaners noticed that part of the beading from around one of the windows in the main door had been ripped away. Mark Blacktin has refitted the beading.
Mrs. McCash asked if this incident had been reported to the police, Mr. Meischke said it had not.
Mrs. McCash asked Parish Councillors to ensure that all incidents, however small, are reported.

Mr. Smith said that the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee need a report to the September Parish Council meeting, how they intend to build up the Community Hall reserves. **Action: B&F/D. Filer**

Mr. Smith said that he was looking to the Community Hall Trustees to improve rather than maintain the Community Hall facilities and put together ideas for how we can improve the functioning of the hall.

Action: Trustees

Mr. Filer said that the Community Hall has huge bookings gaps during the day. The War Memorial Hall however is booked out during the day as well as in the evening.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Sportsfield – goalmouth repair**

Blue Bury Contractors have done a good job of repairing the goalmouths and the recent period of rain has helped to establish the newly turfed areas. The footballers have indicated they will assist with watering the area when the weather is dry.

- **MPPA – Moss Kill**

Mr. Knight said that the MPPA surface currently does not require a moss-kill. He will review the situation in September. **Agenda: 09/15**

Mr. Knight said that the Watford Football Club might be interested in doing some scouting sessions for local talent. If approached the Parish Council needs to decide how to charge for the use of the sportsfield and Community Hall changing room facilities. This item to be discussed by the Community Hall Trustees.

Agenda: Trustees

- **Great Innings Play area**

Dr. Waltham said that there has been a reduction in disruptive behaviour/noise issues at the park recently (Great Innings play area).

East Herts Council agreed to replant the area after they cut some trees down during the upgrading of this area last year. Residents backing onto the park are not in agreement about additional tree planting in this area. One resident would like more trees cut down whereas others want additional planting.

A tree-planting plan has been drawn up and it was agreed that Dr. Waltham and local residents should meet with Mr. Smith to discuss the options. Dr. Waltham to arrange the meeting. **Action: E. Waltham**

Environment Sub-Committee

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

- **Allotments**

Mr. Smith said that he had installed a dipping tank at the far end of the allotments. He said that he and Mrs. Dinnin will monitor how well the new tank is received by allotment holders, before agreeing to install any more tanks. **Action: M. Smith/C. Dinnin**

- **Lammas and Watton Green**

Mr. Smith proposed that to save money this year, the Parish Council only does two grass cuts and the cuttings are not cleared away from the first cut. This should save approximately £500. This was agreed.

New Homes Bonus Sub-Committee

Mr. Smith suggested that the Parish Council does not award any New Homes Bonus grants in 2015/16 but wait until 2016/17. Some Parish Councillors were opposed to this idea.

Mrs. Stanley to arrange a meeting of the New Homes Bonus Sub-Committee to discuss the way forward.

Action: M. Stanley

b) Routine Reports

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

Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke did the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm prior to the meeting.

- ii) **Gas and electricity meter readings**

Mr. Meischke said that he had taken the readings and would text them to the Clerk so she can upload them to our account on the Eon website. **Action: J. Meischke**

- iii) **Fire Inspection**

Mr. Meischke said that Rosemary Brown had not identified any problems during her weekly inspection of the fire equipment.

- iv) **Monthly village-report**

Mrs. Stanley completed the report on 19th May.

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

- **Sportsfield grass** – lovely.
- **Village** – overall looks very good.

- **Community Hall** – water was pouring out of the gutters on the meeting room side of the building prior to the Parish Council meeting.
Mr. Meischke to inspect the gutter and take action as required. **Action: J. Meischke**
 - **Litterbin** – War Memorial litterbin was full.
It was noted that a car stops regularly at this bin to drop off their litter
 - **Dog waste on Walkern road** - overgrown with nettles and therefore may not get used by dog walkers.
Mr. Smith to inspect and take action as required. **Action: M. Smith**
- v) **Weekly sportsfield**
Nothing to report.
- vi) **6-monthly check of MPPA, Play Area on sportsfield and Community Hall equipment**
Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock to arrange a date to carry-out the 6-monthly check. **Action: M. Meischke/D. Stock**
- vii) **Website**
None.
- viii) **Highway and Lighting faults**
None.
County Councillor Ken Crofton said that Hockerill is going to be micro-surfaced during the week commencing 8th June.

9 Correspondence received village organisations

- a) **East Herts Council – Annual Playground safety inspections 2015**
Ian Sharratt (Environmental Manager – Parks and Open Spaces) wrote on the 24th April advising that the annual playground inspections in East Herts are due to take place over a three-week period from 8th June. This year East Herts Council has negotiated a lower fee of £41.50 plus VAT for the inspections, which includes an equipment risk assessment and a pdf copy of the report.
Parish Councillors agreed that East Herts Council should be instructed to do the annual play playground inspection. **Action: J. Allsop**
- b) **David and Frances Taylor – S106 land beside Beane Cottage**
Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have written to advise the Parish Council that they are in the process of selling their property, Beane Cottage. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor’s licence to use, and fence off, Parish Council land between the River Beane Bridge and their boundary (for use as a garden), will expire the day they sell their property. The new owners have expressed an interest to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor to acquire a similar licence from the Parish Council.
If the Parish Council does not receive a request from the new owners by the time Mr. and Mrs. Taylor leave Beane Cottage, they will request that the fencing across Parish Council land is removed.
- **Land registration**
Mr. Smith was pleased to report that Longmores have completed the land registration for the title deeds of both Watton Green and the Sportsfield. Longmores have supplied the registration documents together with the associated maps.
All parcels of land owned by the Parish Council land are now formally registered.

10 Village organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee**
Mr. Stock attended the committee meeting held on 13th May and was happy to report that finances and bookings etc. remain in a healthy state and therefore he had nothing further to say.
- **Police**
Mrs. McCash said that the police are changing the way they run the OWL reporting system to enable access to all members of the public.

11 Items for Parish News

The following items were identified for inclusion in the June 2015 issue of the Parish News.

- The Annual Parish report, the Community Hall Trustees report and summarised accounts.
- Report on works on the Lammas.
- Green-Belt/District plan **Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop**

The meeting closed at 2200.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 16th June 2015.