

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 21st March 2017

Present:	Mr. Mike Smith (Chairman)	Mr. Denis Filer
	Mrs. Catherine Hammon	Mr. Ian Knight
	Mrs. Helen McCash	Mrs. Margaret Stanley
	Mr. David Stock	Dr. Emma Waltham
	Mrs. Jane Allsop (Clerk)	
Police:	PC Nick Musto	
Public:	None	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman) Mrs. Christine Dinnin

2. Public Participation

Mr. Smith invited PC Nick Musto to speak to Parish Councillors about policing matters concerning Watton-at-Stone.

PC Musto updated Parish Councillors on policing matters concerning the village, including the arson attack that occurred at the sportsfield play area at approximately 2300 on Saturday 25th February. Refer to item 7 g. Specific items - Damage to play equipment on sportsfield.

3. Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

4. Declaration of Interests

Mrs. McCash declared a pecuniary interest in item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee - Internal and external auditors for the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts for the year 2016/17 (Mrs. McCash is a partner at McCash and Hay).

5. Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

• Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st February 2017

Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved.

b) Review of actions

1. Contact Bob Thornton re suitable planting on the banks of the Lammis stretch of the River Beane

Mr. Smith said that Bob Thornton has been away on holiday for the past month, but had agreed to consider suitable planting on the Lammis stretch of the riverbank on his return.

2. Purchase subscription to Clerks and Council's

At the February Parish Council meeting, Parish Councillors agreed that the Clerk should purchase a new Parish Council laptop as the one she was using had serious problems. As agreed, she obtained advice from local computer expert, Kaine Joel, and following e-mail approval from Parish Councillors, the following purchase of £799.95 including VAT, was made from John Lewis.

Dell Inspiron 15 5000 Series Laptop, Intel Core i7, 16GB RAM, 256GB SSD, 15.6"

3-year guarantee included.

3. Contact computer expert Kaine Joel for his advice re specification for new laptop

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of Kaine Joel's report on the purchase of a new laptop for the Clerk.

4. Pursue opening a Parish Council deposit account

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

5. Chase Mark Blacktin for quote to reinstate fibreglass insulation in roof space

Mr. Meischke was not present to give his update on this item.

Action: J. Meischke

6. Chase D. P. Electrics re main hall lighting

Mr. Meischke was not present to give his update on this item.

Action: J. Meischke

7. Arrange for new car park sign to be made and installed

Mr. Smith installed the new car park sign today.

8. Contact the Diocesan Board/Church Commissioners re Cricket Club bowling nets.

The Clerk said she had contacted the Church Commissioners and they agreed to confirm if they are the point of contact or if it is a matter for the Diocesan Board.

9. Inspect sportsfield fence re missing section

The fence will be repaired when the sportsfield is drier, to prevent damage to its surface.

Action: M. Smith

10. Put up proposed changes to the Parliamentary boundaries article on Facebook: completed.

c) **Action points resolved**

1. Provide the Clerk with the contact details for Mrs. Milman
2. Write to EHDC re planning application for 5 Stoney Fields
3. Put notices up around the village and on Facebook re the Watton-at-Stone Spring Clean
4. Apply to British Telecom re adopting the phone box outside 105 High Street to house defibrillator
5. Arrange meeting with Beanebytes to discuss updating the Watton-at-Stone website
6. Accept D. P. Electrics quotation for supplying and fitting locking mechanism to outside toilet door
7. Upload H&S Policy/Fire Risk Assessment/Hire agreement on the Watton-at-Stone website
8. Contact Adam Welch re tree quotations
9. Ask for Gas and Electricity readings at the end of the month

6. **Planning**

Mrs. McCash reported on the following items.

a) **Applications**

i) **98 Hazeldell (3/17/0536/HH)**

Single storey front extension

In accordance with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mrs. McCash attempted on several occasions, to make contact with the neighbours at 96 and 100 Hazeldell. She therefore put the Parish Council's standard planning letter through each of their letterboxes.

Mrs. McCash recommended a no comment response to this application. Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed with Mrs. McCash's recommendation. The Clerk to write to East Herts Council accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Mrs. McCash said she was not happy about the response the Parish Council agreed to send the planning department re the application for 5 Stoney Fields. It was explained to Mrs. McCash that the Parish Council decided to see what EHDC's response would be to this first planning extension in the Gatekeeper Meadow estate, before formalising their views on future applications in this area.

Mrs. McCash then requested that the Parish Council review the planning protocol at one of their meetings.

b) **Decisions**

i) **Cannon House, 67-71 High Street (3/17/0093/LBC)**

Replacement of wooden bay windows to front elevation

- East Herts Council – granted

7. **Specific items**

a) **District Councillor Michael Freeman's Report**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of Mr. Freeman's report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. **See attached**

Parish Councillors had no comments on the report.

b) **Dog fouling**

Refer to the above item 7 a, - District Councillor Mike Freeman's report.

EHDC have not yet prosecuted anyone for dog-fouling under their new District Council's Public Spaces Protection Order.

Mr. Smith said that approximately 150 bags have been used out of the dog bag dispenser installed on footpath 17, near Glebe Close.

c) **Station Road and High Street update**

Further to the recent start of works in Station Road, Mr. Stock asked HCC for confirmation that the scheme will continue as planned and the double yellow-lines will be painted soon after the completion of the civil works. He also asked if a formal decision had been taken yet (following complaints/objections received) re the waiting restrictions and double yellow-lines in the High Street.

In response, Bradley Joseph (HCC) informed him that the works in Station Road will proceed as planned, including the waiting restrictions, and the associated yellow-lining will be applied towards the end of the works; around mid-April. With regard to the High Street, HCC has reached a decision about the waiting restrictions and is in the process of signing-off the relevant paperwork in order to finalise the decision (the outcome of which Bradley Joseph was unable to divulge until this had been undertaken). Mr. Stock to contact HCC to establish the outcome of the internal review of the waiting restrictions to be applied to the High Street.

Action: D. Stock

Mr. Stock said that to simplify things he had been giving updates on Station Road and the High Street together but now, due to the progress to date and his increasing workload, he asked that after April the two areas be separated again on our Agendas. He will continue as the lead councillor for Station Road and Mrs. Stanley for the High Street (including the future discussions about the problems associated with the mini-roundabout at the entrance to Great Innings) so as to monitor and review traffic and pedestrian-safety issues at both locations.

As all Parish Councillors are aware, the bus shelters have been installed. Mr. Smith said that the shelter opposite the Bull had to be swapped with the one outside the Grey House at the northern end of the High Street, because the side panels caused line-of-sight problems for drivers exiting School Lane. He is to consider the possibility of fitting some form of seating in the shelter opposite the Bull. **Action: M. Smith**

Mr. Smith also agreed to arrange for the seat outside the Grey House to be removed because it is in poor condition and is no longer necessary now that the bus shelter has been installed. **Action: M. Smith**

Mr. Smith said that Richard Aston had noted that the bus-stop kerbing is made of concrete and not granite, as the others. He agreed to investigate further.

d) Neighbourhood plan – progress report

Dr. Waltham and Mrs. Hammon updated Parish Councillors on current progress. A report of the outcome of the 2nd consultation is being prepared, to be published on the Neighbourhood Plan website. Also, the Steering Group understands that the Neighbourhood Plan for Watton-at-Stone might be classed as "complex", with entitlement to additional funding for professional technical analysis, because it has been asked by EHDC to consider releasing greenbelt land. This is being investigated and further information will be forthcoming after their next meeting, which is scheduled for 29th March.

e) Defibrillator/kiosk adoption

Mr. Smith said he had informed British Telecom (BT) that the Parish Council wanted to adopt the Grade II listed redundant red British Telecom phone box located outside 105 High Street. It is now up to BT to notify EHDC of the Parish Council's wish to adopt this kiosk and to formally take the telephone out of service (albeit it has not worked for several years). Given BT's very slow response to the Parish Council's original enquiry, Mr. Freeman has asked EHDC officers if they can reverse the process by asking BT to launch the consultation rather than EHDC having to wait to be asked.

• Meeting with BT re high-speed internet connection for School Lane

Mr. Smith said he attended a meeting with British Telecom (BT) and some residents of School Lane, on 15th March, re a faster broadband connection for this area. This issue has been dragging on for years and Virgin Media are not interested in taking the matter forward, hence their ridiculous high quotes. BT have come up with a compromise solution which is affordable because of its use of the 'Connected Communities' grants, which subsidise community connection if there is a qualifying school in the community. This results in a cost of just under £300 for 9 connections including the Community Hall, which does have a non-activated BT line installed. It involves installing the BT junction box at Rivershill with a fibre-optic cable from the exchange, which will improve all lines connected to that box within about a 300-meter radius, with 50 megabits' broadband connection. Phones connections more than 300 meters away will also see improvements, but they will be proportionally less than those close to the Rivershill junction box.

BT will only engage with a "legal entity", so the interested parties will form a limited company and dissolve it when the process is complete. The Parish Council is not allowed to be part of this because the government does not allow funds raised by precepts to be used when, in this case the 'connected communities' grant is applied. It may be that the Community Hall Trustees would be able to contribute in its own right. However, the limited company does not need everyone to be shareholders and may be able to simply bill us for the connection without us being directly involved. Parish Councillors agreed that the Community Hall should donate towards this project as it would stand us in good stead should we wish to connect to broadband.

f) Report on website meeting with Beanebytes

Dr. Waltham reported that she, Mr. Smith, Mr. Stock and the Clerk had met with Mark Stewart of Beanebytes to discuss various aspects and possibilities for a new website. Dr. Waltham said it had been a positive meeting and she felt confident the Mark Stewart would be able to deliver what the Parish Council wanted.

Following this meeting it was decided, by the Parish Council attendees, that before we progressed further it would be wise for us to re-visit the structure and content of our current website to establish a new direction.

Mr. Stock is to consider how to proceed and propose a new and much revised structure and presentation of the information to be available on the modern version of our website. It was understood that this will be a very time-consuming task and at this stage is considered to be an on-going action point that will not start until his current involvement in the Station Road scheme has been completed. **Action: D. Stock**

It was agreed to form a website working-group comprising; Dr. Waltham (lead councillor), Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke. As a primary user, the Clerk will be invited to attend all meetings of the working group.

g) Damage to play equipment on sportsfield

On 25th February, someone set fire to the under 5s play equipment at the Sportsfield play area. Following this event, Mr. Smith and the Clerk met with the original installers, Kompan, who provided a quotation of £22,146.87 plus VAT (total £26,576.24) to replace the damaged equipment. This includes the Palace Fortress climbing frame with slide, the 'Crazy Daisy' Toddler Spica and new safety surface under all 5 pieces of play

equipment in this area. The Parish Council insurers AON Limited approved Kompan’s quotation and a 50% deposit has been paid to them and the net value has been paid to the Parish Council from our insurers.

Mr. Smith said that as a gesture of good will, Kompan have donated a double swing to the Parish Council to be installed by the Parish Council at a future date.

Kompan have agreed to start the installation of the play equipment on 18th April. All equipment will be stored at Blue Bury Farm and Mr. Smith will arrange for items to be brought down to the sportsfield (as previously happened for the original installation) as and when required. It is hoped that the installation work will be completed before the first May bank holiday weekend.

h) Notice Boards

Mr. Smith said that he had today reinstated an old Parish Council notice board at the Community Hall, between the external toilet door and the small external cupboard. just below the new car park sign,

Mr. Smith asked Parish Councillors to agree a £500 budget for purchasing a new Parish Council notice board to replace the one located by the village shop. All Parish Councillors present at the meeting were in agreement. **Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop**

8. Sub-Committees

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			
Hertfordshire County	Street lighting and energy costs from 01.04.16 to 31.03.17		1210.98
Wages and salaries	To March 2017		1143.58
John Lewis	Dell lap top		799.95
Amazon	2 printer cartridges, laminating sleeves, adapter		32.76
Kompan	50% deposit on replacement play equipment – see income		13,288.12
Post Office Limited	Tax and NI		162.30
Mark Blacktin	Stain post to ornate sign – labour and materials		85.00
			<u>16,722.69</u>
Cheques received			
HMRC	VAT rebate for 2015/16		3,123.76
Crawford & Co for Aon	Play equipment claim – 50% Kompan deposit		11,073.44
Donation	Towards play equipment		50.00
			<u>14247.20</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
		None	
Carla Beach – (4 weeks)	166.00		
Tony Silvestri – Pavilion (4 weeks)	40.00		
Clare Young – Main Hall (3 weeks)	30.00		
Forever Active	276.00		
Charlotte Sharpe– Main Hall & Pavilion	72.00		
Victoria Hurley – Main Hall & Pavilion	45.00		
	<u>629.00</u>		
Cheques issued			
Wages	Hall cleaning to March 2017		549.87
Floodlighting services Ltd	Service floodlights on double courts		<u>906.00</u>
			<u>1455.87</u>
Cheques received			
Michael Cohen	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		72.00
HMRC	VAT rebate		182.91
Youth Drop Inn	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		178.50
Felicitas Dixon	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		22.00
Dave Boddy	Main Hall		180.00
Felicitas Dixon	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		<u>22.00</u>
			<u>657.41</u>

Parish Councillors agreed the payments.

- **Arrange meeting to discuss new deposit account for the Parish Council and a credit or debit card**
Mr. Filer said that he had discussed this item with Mr. Meischke and agreed that before arranging a meeting of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee, they would meet with the Clerk.

Action: D. Filer/J. Meischke/J. Allsop

- **Internal and external auditors for the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts for the year 2016/17**

- **Appointment of Internal Auditor for the Parish Council accounts**

As previously reported, Mr. Morrissey had expressed his wish not to continue as the Parish Council's internal auditor. At the November 2017 Parish Council meeting Stuart McCash (working under McCash and Hay) was appointed as the internal auditor.

The Clerk will arrange for the Parish Council accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2017, to be submitted to Stuart McCash (McCash and Hay) for auditing.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Appointment of the External audit of the Community Hall accounts**

It was agreed to re-appoint McCash and Hay to carry-out the audit of the Community Hall accounts.

The Clerk will arrange for the Community Hall accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2017, to be submitted to McCash and Hay for auditing.

Action: J. Allsop

- **East Herts Council - Community Hall Rates**

The annual demand for rates has been received from East Herts Council at £1365.15 for the year 2017/18, payable in 10 monthly payments.

The Community Hall benefits from an 80% rate relief.

Community Hall Trustees

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

- **External toilet door electronic locking mechanism**

Awaiting installation by D. P. Electrics.

- **Pavilion door lock and handle**

Michael Lewis (A. P. Access) has removed the old lock and fitted a new keyless lock together and a door handle.

- **Main hall lighting**

This remains on hold awaiting a response from D. P. Electrics.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Forever Active report**

There continues to be a small increase in the numbers attending the Forever Active programme continue so things remain very positive.

- **Toys belonging to the former Dots and Tots**

The Football Club was having a full FA inspection and required both Referee changing rooms to be clear. Mr. Smith therefore emptied out the toys from the Referee's changing room in which they were stored.

- **Car park sign**

Refer to item 5 b 7, Review of actions - Arrange for new car park sign to be made and installed.

- **Internet**

Refer to item following 7 e, Defibrillator/kiosk adoption.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Sportsfield**

Mr. Knight said that he and Mr. Smith need to decide by the end of March, what needs to be done to the sportsfield grass this season.

- **New Tennis court**

Sports Courts will be painting the new tennis court surface in the next couple of weeks. Payment for this work was withheld from the original quotation.

- **Floodlighting Limited**

Floodlighting Limited have written (letter dated 17th March) stating that they are dissolving their business. However, all servicing works and any work required during the warranty period, will be handled by Floodlighting Services Limited.

Environment Sub-Committee

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

- **Lammas**
 - **Steps**

CMS volunteers were scheduled to repair and realign the Lammas steps today. Mr. Smith said he did not know if the work had been done, but they had also agreed to remove some guards from around some of the Lammas trees.
 - **Planting along the river bank**

This item awaits Bob Thornton's report on appropriate planting (refer to 5 b 1, Review of actions - Contact Bob Thornton re suitable planting on the banks of the Lammas stretch of the River Beane).
- **War Memorial**

Paul Reynolds has not yet pressure washed around the War Memorial. Mrs. Dinnin to chase.
Action: C. Dinnin
- **Removal of Conifer trees on the sportsfield**

During a recent storm one of the two Conifer trees at the far side of the sportsfield was badly damaged. The following quotations were obtained and after e-mail agreement, Tree Smiths' quotation was accepted to remove both trees.

 - Adam Welch

- Clear fallen branches	£390
- Remove fallen branches and rest of tree to ground level	£950
- Remove both trees to ground level	£1900
 - Blue Bury Contractors

- Clear fallen branches	£250
- To clear whole damaged tree	£650
- To clear both trees	£1250
 - Tree Smiths

- To remove fallen branches	£250
- To fell one damaged conifer	£525
- To fell both conifers	£1050

Mr. Smith said that Tree Smiths are scheduled to remove the two Conifer trees within the next week. They have been delayed in doing the work because the sportsfield has been too wet to take heavy machinery across it.
- **Relocation of Harry's memorial bench**

Harry's memorial bench was being relocated because it was getting covered in bird droppings due to its nearness to the two Conifer trees. Now that these trees are being removed, there is no longer a need to relocate Harry's bench.
- **Re-surfacing of School Lane**

As reported at the February Parish Council meeting, the upper sections of School Lane were not resurfaced because the equipment they used was not suitable for the narrow path. Hertfordshire Highways have now agreed to include the resurfacing of this section of School Lane in their planned maintenance work schedule.

New Homes Bonus Sub-Committee

Nothing to report.

b) Routine Reports

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

Mr. Smith and Mr. Meischke to arrange to carry-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests.
Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke
- ii) **Gas and electricity meter readings**

The Clerk to e-mail either Mr. Meischke or Mr. Smith, at the end of each month, to ask them to take the gas and electricity meter readings.
Action: J. Allsop
- iii) **Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests**

Nothing adverse to report.

iv) Monthly village-report

Mrs. Stanley completed the report on 19th March.

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

- **Sportsfield fencing:** fence at top has a bit missing. Mr. Smith said he would be repairing it when weather allows. **Action: M. Smith**
- **Sportsfield grass:** good but needs cutting soon.
- **Bike ramps:** could not be inspected due to the fallen Conifer branches – refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Removal of Conifer trees on the sportsfield.
- **Community Hall** – mud on high-level windows.
- **Oak tree by tennis courts** – some dead wood. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Dinnin to inspect. **Action: M. Smith/C. Dinnin**
- **Allotments:** tree fallen onto the shed at the back of the War Memorial hall site. Mrs. Dinnin and Mrs. McCash to inspect to see who the tree belongs too. **Action: C. Dinnin/H. McCash**
- **War Memorial:** weeds starting to come through. Mrs. Dinnin to inspect. **Action: C. Dinnin**
- **Litter bin on footpath 17.**
Mr. Smith said that he had installed a new litterbin at the Church Lane end of footpath 17 and put two bins back to back at the sportsfield carpark.
- **Rubbish in the Churchyard**
Mrs. McCash said that someone is putting domestic rubbish on the Church's bonfire heap.

v) Weekly sportsfield

Nothing to report.

vi) Website/Facebook

Put up planned installation date for replacement play equipment on Facebook.

Action: J. Allsop

vii) Highway and Lighting faults

- Potholes in Station Road near the entrance to Hazeldell and on Church Lane along its length that runs parallel to the railway line.
- Drain at entrance of Rectory Lane at its junction with Statin Road.
- **Dog fouling**
This item to be added to the monthly agendas under Routine reports. **Action: J. Allsop**

9. Correspondence received

Nothing to report.

10. Village organisations

Nothing to report.

11. Items for Parish News

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

- Installation of replacement under 5s play equipment.

The meeting closed at 2028.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 18th April 2017.