

## Minutes of the Zoom Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon	Cllr. Ian Knight
	Cllr. Kay Jancey	Cllr. Helen McCash
	Cllr. David Stock	Cllr. Emma Waltham
	District Councillor Sophie Bell	Clerk: Jane Allsop

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: None

### 2. Public participation

None.

### 3. Chairman's/ Clerk's report

Cllr. Smith said that he had subscribed the Parish Council to Zoom at a cost of £14.39 for one month.

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Visit sportsfield to agree exact location re installation of new Oak tree**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Oak trees on the Meadow (sportsfield).
2. **Contact guttering specialist**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees - Gutters.
3. **Visit the allotments to discuss entrance track**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Allotments.
4. **Inspect Oak tree beside tennis courts**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Oak trees on the Meadow (sportsfield).
5. **Investigate fallen trees in Lammas woodland**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Lammas.

#### c) Action points resolved

1. Return completed precept to East Herts Council
2. E-mail all allotments
3. Investigate fallen trees in Lammas woodland
4. Arrange for the disposal of the old acoustic screen

Cllr. Meischke thanked Cllrs. Block and Jancey for disposing of the old acoustic panel at the tip.

#### d) Action points outstanding for more than two months

1. **Send minute books to HCC for archiving:** outstanding.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### 6. Planning

#### a) Applications

The following planning applications were dealt with via e-mail and letters put through the doors of residents as and when required.

##### i) **1 Watton House (3/21/0120/HH)**

Demolition of detached garage and side entrance way; erection of two storey side and rear extension; loft conversion with roof lights to rear; alterations to fenestration and creation of front entrance way with porch  
Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response and the Clerk advised the planning department accordingly.

##### ii) **14 Lammas Road (3/21/0185/HH)**

Replacement bay window to front elevation. Part two storey, part single storey rear extension. New first floor side window openings, garage conversion and alterations to fenestration

Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response, but after Cllr. Smith consulted with the neighbours', he instructed the Clerk to write to the planning department as follows.

'The Parish Council does not object in principle but asks that, at the neighbours' request, the degree of overshadowing be given due consideration.'

## b) Decisions

The following planning decisions were received after the February agenda was published.

- **Highfields, Whempstead Road, Whempstead (3/20/2549/FUL)**  
Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of dwelling with detached double garage  
-EHDC permission granted
- **Lamsden House, Blue Hill Farm, High Elms Lane (3/20/2590/HH)**  
Removal of balconies and demolition of rear extension. Single storey side/rear extensions. Alteration to fenestration and glass roof over garden room. Proposed basement/wine cellar. Renewal of solar thermal panels to photovoltaic panels to main roof. Proposed canopy attached to the rear elevation. Replacement of windows and doors to detached garage  
-EHDC permission granted

## 7. Reports

### a) Neighbourhood plan and Benefits Committee – progress reports

Cllr. Waltham reported as follows.

The NP steering group met via zoom in February and will meet again in March. The group is finalising the NP draft ready to begin consultation regulation 14 when lockdown lifts. The summary brochure, which will be distributed to all households in the parish, as well as other stakeholders, has been circulated to the Parish Council for review.

Cllr. Waltham added that as reported at the January Parish Council meeting, the Regulation 14 consultation has been postponed until the end of the current lockdown.

Cllr. Smith reminded all Parish Councillors to take the time to read through the draft Regulation 14 brochure.

**Action: Parish Councillors**

Cllr. Waltham asked if she could have comments as soon as possible and thanked Cllrs. Smith and Dinnin for their contributions.

Cllr. Hammon said that the brochure is mostly a repeat of policies that were on the boards at the last NP exhibition (19<sup>th</sup> January 2020).

Cllr. Bell asked if a copy of the draft could be e-mailed to her. Cllr. Smith agreed to do this and also send a copy to Cllr. McCash.

**Action: M. Smith**

### b) Footpaths

- **Hazeldell Footpaths** - report provided by Cllr. Stock

Cllr. Stock reported that the very long-standing issue with the severely blocked drain adjacent to No. 84 has now been worked on and appears to be clear at last. As reported previously, the remedial work outstanding re the footpaths is scheduled.

He was also pleased to say that the two new trees requested to replace those lost some time ago have been planted (and protected) on one of the Hazeldell grass-verges, and look very good.

- **High Street footpaths** – report provided by Cllr. Block

Improvement works have begun on the High Street and Great Innings footpaths. Work started at the Walkern Road end of the Village and is progressing towards the Ware Road end.

So far six new or improved pedestrian crossing points have been started or completed.

Cllr. Block said the High Street footpaths are due to be finished on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February and he agreed to have a wonder round early next week to see how it is going.

**Action: S. Block**

## 8. Reports

### a) Sub-Committees

#### Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
None		None
<b>Payments</b>		
Wages and salaries	January 2021	1294.43
Frank Cooper	clearing rubbish from allotments	708.00
Majestic Trees	Holm Oak tree for sportsfield	790.56
Govresources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan	2,700.00
Currys	Logitech wireless keyboard	43.94
HCC	10 reams of copy paper, 12 hand writer pens (£1.79 ex VAT)	24.92
Adam Welch	Clearing of two trees on the Lammas	130.00
Marine Goudoffre	Neighbourhood plan - production of drawings & amendments	600.00
		<b>6,291.85</b>

<b>Receipts</b>		
Nationwide	Interest	17.34
Santander	Interest	0.22
		<b>17.56</b>

**Watton-at-Stone Community Hall**

<b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>		<b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>	
None		None	
<b>Payments</b>			
HCC	Cleaning materials		59.26
Wages	Cleaning		45.25
British Gas	Electricity		39.55
HMRC	VAT return 12/2020		55.46
			<b>199.52</b>
Parish Council	Reimburse Trustees insurance		379.00
Santander	Bank interest		0.09
			<b>379.09</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

• **Annual review of documents**

• **Financial Regulations**

Parish Councillors reviewed the Financial regulations document, dated February 2020, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2021.

• **Risk Assessment and Financial Management**

Parish Councillors reviewed the Risk Assessment and Financial Management document dated February 2020. The following entry was added.

Pandemic	Protect people from harm	Follow government regulations, includes taking reasonable steps to protect Councillors, workers, hirers, and members of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus.</li> <li>Think about who could be at risk.</li> <li>Decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed.</li> <li>Act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.</li> </ul>
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Parish Councillors adopted the revised Risk Assessment and Financial Management document, which will be dated February 2021.

The Clerk to upload the revised Financial regulations and the Risk Assessment documents to the Watton-at-Stone website.

**Action: J. Allsop**

• **Long term capital expenditure**

Cllr. Block said that this document is currently being updated but questioned why it was 5, 10 and 15 years with nothing for 1-5 years.

Cllr. McCash said that long term capital expenditure items should be 5 years, 10 years, and 15-year assessments into expenditure. Shorter term items of 1 to 4 years need to be added to the precept and planned for in the budget.

Cllr. Meischke said that he was in the process of updating the Long-term capital expenditure items. He suggested that the capital expenditure sheet should include 1-year figures then 2 to 5 years as well as the long-term capital expenditure figures (5, 10 and 15 years). He agreed to e-mail members of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee, Cllr. McCash and the Clerk his revised document.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Cllr. Block to arrange a meeting of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee to discuss this item further before the March Parish Council meeting.

**Action: S. Block**

This item to be placed on the March agenda.

**Agenda: 03/21**

• **Asset register for 2020/2021**

The Asset register is in the process of being updated ahead of the end of year accounts (31<sup>st</sup> March) and will be also be reviewed before the annual insurance policy renewal, due on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

**Community Hall Trustees**

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

• **Gutters**

Cllr. Meischke said that he had to call out guttering specialists, T. G. Shultar & Son Ltd, as a matter of urgency because there was so much water going down the wall that it was swelling the door of the outside toilets, making it impossible to shut. This left the outside toilet door unlocked for three nights and young people were accessing the toilets and left a terrible mess. The cleaner had to clear up debris from items such as Chinese take-away meals as well as drug paraphernalia. He said that the toilet door has now been fixed.

Cllr. Meischke explained that the guttering was changed some years ago, from plastic to steel guttering and the joints to the downpipes were done very badly and are now all starting to leak. This was because the steel guttering and steel downpipe sizes did not match. The installers had used plastic pipe sections to take up size differences and silicone sealant used to make the joints watertight. These have now broken down which is why the guttering is leaking.

To resolve the problem the guttering specialist will be replacing all the connections between the gutters and the downpipes with specially made fittings. They have already fitted a gutter extension on the main entrance side of the building which should rectify the problem of water missing the gutter during heavy rain. The car park side of the building does not have the same problem.

Cllr. McCash asked Cllr. Meischke if the drug paraphernalia had been reported to the police and he said it had not, but he would try and find out the details from the cleaners and pass the information to her. This would have happened approximately 8 days ago.

**Action: J. Meischke**

#### **Update:**

T. G. Shutlar & Son Ltd have completed the guttering work at a cost of £320 plus VAT. Their work included, replacing all the connections from the gutter to the downpipes and fitting a gutter overflow board on the Pavilion side only.

The new system now awaits heavy rain to check that it is all working properly.

- **Outside toilet door**

Refer to above item.

### **Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee**

Cllr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **Tennis courts surfaces**

It was reported last month that there are small holes on the new court that need repair. This still needs to be addressed.

The condition of the surface of both courts is to be looked at. Prices have been obtained for repainting and resurfacing. A long-term strategy for court maintenance needs to be generated.

Cllr. Knight said he would produce a comparison of pricings.

**Action: I. Knight**

### **Environment Sub-Committee**

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

We have been getting estimates for the repair of the footpath surface and car park area at the entrance to the allotments from Frank Cooper, Jeff Skidmore, and Chris Hart. Cllr. Dinnin said we already have two quotations and are now awaiting one from Chris Hart. She will e-mail all three quotations to Parish Councillors in due course so a contractor can be agreed.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

David Wilkinson who is on the Allotment Committee has taken a new Insurance public liability policy out for £157.29 which is an increase of £76 09 on last year. Their previous insurers were not willing to provide cover and their brokers could only find cover that was age restricted to 16- to 75-year-olds only. The Clerk gave David Wilkinson the contact details for BHIB, the brokers the Parish Council use and they were able to provide the cover required. However, he did not notify the Clerk that there would be a premium increase prior to taking out the policy. The Parish Council pays for the insurance cover every year as a retrospective payment. Cllr. Dinnin said that the Parish Council will need to increase the allotment rent in October to cover this and any repair work that is done on the footpath entrance.

Cllr. McCash said that EIG (Ecclesiastical) insurance, now do an allotment policy which looks quite comprehensive.

Cllr. Dinnin said that she is in the process of updating the Allotment tenancy agreement and will forward it to Parish Councillors for discussion in due course.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Oak trees on the Meadow (sportsfield)**

Cllr. Dinnin met Cllrs. Smith and Meischke and they made the decision to put the new Oak tree at the top of the Meadow to the left of Harry's bench.

The Oak tree by the tennis courts has had the fungus on it for a long time and it was decided no action is required.

- **Lammas**

Adam Welch has cut the fallen trees on the Lammas at a cost of £130. Much of the Lammas is still flooded and frozen over.

- **War Memorial** - Cllr Stock provided the following report.

Further to his discussions with Ben Storey (Grassroots), Cllr. Stock has received a revised quotation for the work to repair the damage caused to the War Memorial site. The reason for the revision is the inclusion of the planting required to fill the space left by the loss of the large established shrub next to the bench. The replacement planting is of the same type as that lost. As hoped, it appears that the damage to one small

section of the boundary-hedge should be recoverable without the need for new planting. Reclaimed slabs will be used where possible during the repairs.

On 12 February Cllr. Meischke informed Cllr. Stock that our insurance company had accepted our claim and the settlement (less the excess) is forthcoming and that if their solicitors are successful in retrieving the money from the third-party insurers, then the excess will be refunded to us accordingly.

Having updated Councillors by e-mail, it was agreed that Cllr. Stock asks Grassroots to undertake the repairs as soon as is practicable so as to restore the site to its previous good condition without undue delay. This he did on Sunday 14 February and will discuss the way forward with Ben Storey. **Action: D. Stock**

- **Cottage site at Watton Green**

Cllr. Dinnin forwarded an e-mail from Tony Bradford regarding work required on the Cottage site. He will be undertaking this work on 20<sup>th</sup> of February. CMS have merged with Countryside Council Rights of Way and they still have some volunteer working groups set up. She said that there was a tree fallen across the footpath which is on the opposite riverbank to Rivershill and she thought she might ask Tony Bradford if the volunteer group could clear this in Spring.

Cllr. Smith said that there is also a tree branch fallen on Watton Green near the seat that needs clearing. It is currently hanging on the branch of another tree. It was agreed that Cllr. Dinnin ask Adam Welch to clear the branch and leave it in the wooded area. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Tree branch – High Street**

Cllr. Meischke said that in the High Street, opposite the Chestnuts, right in the middle of the road there is a large branch hanging on another branch. He said we ought to let Highways know because it could easily fall on a car. The branch is about 12 to 15 feet long. The tree is in the Chesnuts garden, which is a Woodhall Estate property, but the tenant is responsible for the upkeep of all trees.

It was agreed that the Clerk report this to Highways and contact the tenant.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Cllr. Meischke to give the Clerk photos of the tree and Cllr. McCash to give Cllr. Smith the tenants phone number. **Action: J. Meischke/H. McCash**

## b) Routine Reports

### i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests

Cllr. Meischke carries out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests on a regular basis. He continues to inspect the hall regularly including running the water every 2-3 days to prevent the risk of legionnaires disease.

### ii) Gas and electricity meter readings

Cllr. Meischke gives the Clerk gas and electricity meter readings at the end of each month and she uploads these readings to the providers websites.

### iii) Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests

Done.

### iv) Monthly village-report

Cllr. Jancey completed the report on 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

A copy of the report has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors; therefore, the following is a summary.

- **Small swings:** Rubber on seat surrounds worn in places.
- **Bike ramps - Fun box:** Dip in grass at one end.  
Cllrs. Smith and Meischke to inspect and take action if required. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**
- **Community Hall:** Mud on walls and windows facing football pitch. Paint peeling on some doors and windows – Trustees aware. Gutter downpipes leaking - Cllr. Meischke aware. (This has now been resolved - refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – Gutters).
- **Tennis courts/General:** Courts locked, no litter, some information fallen inside notice board.
- **Recycling clothes bin:** large bag of wood near the scout hut? Dumped.
- **Dog waste bins -** Walkern Road bin in an inappropriate place. May be better placed at entrance to field nearer to Beane Road.

Cllr. Dinnin said that a neighbour in Beane Road had also pointed out that the Walkern Road bin was in an inappropriate place and would be better placed beside the litterbin near the River Beane bridge. She added that people are now filling the litterbin on the Lammas with dog waste and the other day the man from the council was seen removing all the dog waste and dumping it in a bag at the side. She suggested that we could have two dog bins or another large one like at the Mill Lane end. Cllr. Meischke said that they are not being emptied often enough either and maybe we should ask EHDC to empty them more often during the current pandemic, even if it means we need to contribute to the extra emptying. The Clerk said that Rosemary had spoken to the man who empties the dog bins and he told her that a lot of staff were off work, and he was having to do their duties as well as his own. Cllr. Smith suggested that

we put up a couple of temporary litterbins, one at the end of footpath 17 and look to see where another bin would ease the congestion. Cllrs. Smith and Block agreed to investigate further.

**Action: M. Smith/S. Block**

Cllr. McCash said she spoke to a council worker who told her that from 31<sup>st</sup> March it would be illegal to put dog waste in litterbins. The council workers will be removing the dog waste from litterbins, but not taking the dog waste away. Cllr. Smith said that we would need clarification from EHDC. Mrs. McCash said in Hazeldell they do not have any dog waste bins.

Cllr. Bell agreed to speak to EHDC to find out if they are changing their policy on dog waste in litterbins. She also agreed to find out if they would install a larger dog waste bin on Walkern Road and relocate it near the litterbin by the River Beane bridge.

**Action: S. Bell**

- **War Memorial:** Neat and tidy. No litter. Shrub that was damaged by car incident has been removed.
- **Defibrillator:** reported to Clerk out of order for 24 hours. New battery ordered and replaced by Cllr. Meischke. Back in service. Cold weather cover in place.  
Cllr. Meischke said that the person he spoke to about the battery life said that they had had lots of people phoning him during this recent very cold spell of weather and even the defibrillators with heaters are having problems because they are not designed to work in exceptionally low temperatures.
- **Ornate village sign:** - No evidence of fungus as reported last month.
- **General Comments:**
  - Church Lane to the left of the church was treacherous. Extremely icy and slippery. Could do with a salt bin at the bottom of the hill.
  - River flowing through Mill Lane culvert.
  - 3 doors which had been left by Scout Hut now dumped in the river. Escalated to Environment Agency and Bob Thornton also made aware.

Cllr. Jancey wondered if it would be possible to install a salt bin at the bottom of Church Lane.

Cllr. McCash said that the Parish Council had been unsuccessful in their attempts to get highways to install a bin in this location.

Cllr. Waltham said that there is a drain that is always blocked at the top of Church Lane. The adjacent high bank allows leaves and mud to compound the problem. Water often runs down the lane because of the blocked drain and in cold weather this water then freezes.

Cllr. Smith to take photos of the drain and the Clerk to report on Highways faults.

**Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop**

Cllr. Waltham also added that on footpath 17, at the top of School Lane, the fence on the opposite side to the holly hedge is falling into the lane. This fence is on a bank and could hurt someone if it fell. She said it would be good if this fence could be repaired before the children go back to school on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

The Clerk to write to the owner of the fence.

**Action: J. Allsop**

v) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

vi) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Refer to item 8 iv, Monthly village-report.

vii) **Website/Facebook**

None.

viii) **Highway and Lighting faults**

None.

ix) **Dog fouling reports**

Refer to item 8 iv, Monthly village-report.

x) **Police reports**

The Clerk received a message today from PCSO Sally Brooks to say that she had not had time today to put a report together but would e-mail one through to the Parish Council in the next few days.

- **Brown bin:** Cllr. Smith suggested that we put the EHDC Memo about garden waste bins on our website and Facebook page. The Clerk said that she had already done this.

Cllr. Bell said that the EHDC will be sending leaflets out to all residents re the charging of brown bins. She said that they will no longer be producing the bin collection dates calendar. This is due to the fact they are short of money and are trying to find ways to cost cut and the calendar costs £30,000 to produce each year.

Cllr. Bell said she would try and get the bin collection dates for the year and then these could be included in the parish news each month. The Clerk suggested that it could also be put on the website and the Parish Council Facebook page too.

**Action: S. Bell**

- **Watton Place clinic:** Cllr. McCash said that Dr. Shah had asked her if the Parish Council would post their Covid vaccination weekly updates on the Watton-at-Stone website and she told them they could. Parish Councillors were in agreement.

- **Dog waste:** Cllr. Meischke suggested that we put an article in the Parish News asking people to take more care with their dog waste. Bearing in mind that there are more dog walkers out at the moment and litterbin and dog waste bins are not being emptied as often as they should be. He suggested that dog owners could be asked to put their dog waste in their home bin. Cllr. McCash said you cannot put dog waste in your home bin. As other Parish Councillors were not aware about this, Cllr. Bell agreed to ask EHDC to clarify the situation. **Action: S. Bell**

#### **Report by District Cllrs. Sophie Bell**

Cllr. Bell reported on the following items.

- **Dog theft**  
There is an increase in dog thefts in the home counties. Cllr. Bell suggested that the Parish Council could put something on Facebook to make residents aware of the situation.
- **Housing Association**  
Cllr. Bell is having a problem with both Clarian and Castle Housing Association not doing urgent remedial work during lockdown. She is trying to get them out to look at some very pressing issues and may have to get the council to put further pressure on them.
- **EHDC funding**  
Cllr. Bell said that she is looking at supporting a funding application for the Methodist Church who need repairs to part of their roof. EHDC will in Spring be opening up their next round of larger community grants, which she believed is up to £10,000. Cllr. McCash said that the Parish Church also has lots of problems with its building and asked Cllr. Bell if she would support their application, which she said she would. Cllr. Bell said she would let Cllr. McCash know as soon as the funding deadlines are available.

**Action: S. Bell**

### **9. Correspondence received**

None.

### **10. Village organisations**

None

### **11. Items for Parish News**

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

Cllr. McCash asked Cllr. Knight if printed copies of the Parish News will be available after the Covid pandemic is all over. Cllr. Knight said the answer is yes.

The Clerk said that she posts the Parish News on our website each month and also puts the website link on our Facebook page.

**The meeting closed 2012**

**The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**