

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Steve Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon (until 2112)	Cllr. Kay Jancey
	Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr. David Stock
	Cllr. Emma Waltham	Clerk: Jane Allsop

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Helen McCash, and District Cllr. Sophie Bell.

### 2. Public participation

None.

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

Cllr. Smith said he would be taking an additional item, Jubilee celebrations, under item 7, Specific Items - Jubilee celebrations

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Arrange for the purchase and fitting of two handrails for the new entrance onto the sportsfield**  
Cllr. Smith said that he had found a handrail supplier and would arrange their purchase. Cllrs. Smith and Meischke to meet with Ben Storey re a quote for installing the handrails. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**
2. **Replace the wooden steps on the rainbow multi-play and slide play equipment**  
Cllr. Smith said he had been a little careless with some paperwork concerning purchases for items that come under the Community Hall. Some internet purchases are difficult to get invoiced to a third party, i.e., the Community Hall, but such evidence that he did have was dissed during his family mayhem at Christmas. He also bought for cash some path edging surplus at the revamped play area due to a change in specification which will be used in our car park extension.  
Items as follows
  - 25 pieces Path edging stored onsite £ 75 (Marshall retail charge £5.26 per piece)
  - Rainbow multi-play and slide  
Timber for play area repair supplied free courtesy of Woodhall Estate  
Cut and finished courtesy of Jarret Fencing  
Finished and part fitted MS  
Fixtures fittings for above and Sadolin finish (Ex Amazon - £26)
 Parish Councillors agreed to reimburse Cllr. Smith £100 from the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall's account. **Action: J. Allsop**
3. **Arrange meeting to discuss Sports**  
Refer to item 7 c Specific items – Sports Clubs.
4. **Confirm that Wicksteed Leisure have levelled and turfed old footpath to tennis courts**  
Cllr. Meischke confirmed that this work has now been completed.
5. **Draw up job description for a caretaker**  
Cllr. Meischke said that the Trustees would be meeting to discuss this item before the February Parish Council meeting. **Action: J. Meischke**
6. **Arrange for more visible defibrillator signage for the BT phone box**  
Cllr. Smith confirmed that 1<sup>st</sup> Call signs had made three visible notices that have been fitted into the glass panes of the BT phone box.

#### c) Action points resolved

1. Write to planning department re application for Land at St Andrews and St Marys Church, Church
2. Write to planning department re application for Heath Mount School
3. Write to planning department re application for 48 Great Innings North

#### 4. Upload all relevant files to Neighbourhood Plan section of the website

Cllr. Waltham said that she and the Clerk had done a lot to work to the Watton-at-Stone website adding information under the Neighbourhood Plan section to allow for Regulation 14 to progress.

She said that the current website is difficult to use and needs to be made more user friendly for the administrators. Currently the Clerk is the only person that is able to update/maintain the site apart from Beanebytes, who has no wish to do updates but is happy to help when structural issues occur. Cllr. Waltham said that more than one person should be trained to maintain the website and it needs updating to make it more user friendly as in its current form it would be very difficult to do.

Cllrs. Meischke said that he might know a contact who could help.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Cllr. Waltham also to investigate options.

**Action: E. Waltham**

5. Speak to the A602 team about dog bin
6. Find out if there are any funding sources for a Speed Indicator Devises
7. E-mail to Ken Crofton for remaining resurfacing work required in Hockerill
8. Sign Budget and Finance Sub-Committee Minutes
9. Accept contractors' quotations for work in 2022
10. Accept Wicksteed Leisure's quotation for extra work on the play area
11. Ask Mark Blacktin to quote for installing two concrete slabs for new benches
12. Check new first aid kit and find out what extra items are required
13. Ask Lyn Oakman the whereabouts of the Youth Club set of Community Hall keys
14. Accept Sports Courts quotation to pressure wash and moss kill all three tennis courts
15. Resolve lighting problem of Tennis players accessing the courts from Church Walk at night
16. Look at the option of installing another litterbin near the Tennis Courts

## 6. Planning

### a) Applications

Cllr. Smith reported on the following planning application, which he had e-mailed to all Parish Councillors prior to the meeting.

#### i) Heath Mount School, Woodhall Park (3/21/3182/FUL)

Retention of 1 single storey Portakabin building to be used as an additional classroom for a period of 26 weeks.

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

**Action: J. Allsop**

The following amended planning application was received after the agenda was printed.

#### • Heath Mount School, Woodhall park (3/21/2680/FUL)

Proposed cabin to be used as classroom

Parish Councillors agreed no further comment is required.

### b) Decisions

#### i) George & Dragon, 82 High Street (3/21/1495/LBC)

Erection of 5 x externally illuminated wall mount signs; 1 x trough light to existing house, plus 2 trough lights to existing projecting signs; 6 x building light.

- EHDC permission granted

#### ii) George & Dragon, 82 High Street (3/21/1491/ADV)

Erection of 5 x externally illuminated wall mount signs; 1 x trough light to existing house, plus 2 trough lights to existing projecting signs; 6 x building light.

- EHDC permission granted

## 7. Specific items

### a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

Cllr. Sophie Bell did not provide a report for this meeting.

### b) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

The Regulation 14 consultation started on 14 January and will run until 6 March. Every household has received a summary brochure and response form. There will be a Q&A session at the Nigel Poulton Community Hall on 6 February, 3-5 pm. Cllr. Waltham thanked the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Parish Clerk for all their hard work to achieve this. Over the last 6 weeks we have:

- Finalised the 86 Plan and 20-page summary brochure, as well as making them accessible to screen readers
- Delivered 1150 brochures to every household in the parish
- Built a new website and online response form
- Sent letters to 76 stakeholders
- Printed and put up banners, posted on Facebook, written a piece for the Parish News and e-mailed 176 residents
- Finalised the SEA with AECOM
- Liaised with our solicitors regarding producing an option on a lease for land at Mill Lane
- Met with Fairview
- Held a Steering Group meeting
- Prepared a 45-page consultation statement
- Written a 12-page basic conditions statement

Cllr. Hammon said that wanted to take this opportunity to thank Cllr. Waltham for all the work she has done driving regulation 14 forward. She has done an exceptional job project managing everything.  
Parish Councillors present at the meeting all expressed their sincere thanks to Cllr. Waltham.

**c) Sports Clubs**

Cllr. Block to arrange a meeting date with the Trustees.

**Action: S. Block**

**d) A602 improvement scheme**

Cllr. Meischke said that there were terrible disruptions on the roads due to the closure of the A602/A119 roundabout during a recent weekend. Diversions were not properly in place and signage was inappropriately positioned. This led to drivers taking alternative and often inappropriate routes down narrow roads, with journey times often delaying them by more than an hour. Cllr. Meischke said he had thought of writing a letter of complaint to highways but felt that it would have little or no effect.

He has recently spoken to some of the site workers who informed him that the implementation of the new road had caused lots of problems. They told him they had never had to make so many alterations on any project.

**e) Hockerill footpath behind the George and Dragon public house**

Cllr. Smith said he had contacted County Councillor Ken Crofton about the poor condition of the footpath behind the George and Dragon. Cllr. Crofton said that the footpath needs to be cleared of debris, leaves etc, so its condition can be assessed. He agreed to arrange for this work to be done and to report back to Cllr. Smith what work is required.

This item to remain on the agenda until resolved.

**Agenda: 02/2022**

**f) Memorial seats**

Glasdon UK have estimated that the two memorial benches will be delivered sometime in mid to late February. Cllr. Meischke is arranging for Ben Storey to quote for installing two concrete pads for these seats to sit on.

**Action: J. Meischke**

This item to remain on the agenda.

**Agenda: 03/2022**

**• Bike ramps**

Cllr. Dinnin asked if the bike ramps are still going to be scrapped. Cllr. Smith said when Wicksteed Leisure went to remove them, they discovered that they were concreted into the ground. They were asked to leave them in-situ as there would have been a charge for their removal.

Cllrs. Smith and Meischke to inspect the bike ramps to see how much work is involved to remove them.

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

**g) Speed signs**

Cllr. Smith said he has submitted a grant application for one SID (speed indication device) and two sockets, from the Police Commissioner's scheme that is specifically for this purpose.

**h) Meeting dates for the civic year 2022/2023**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a list of the dates for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in the month for the Civic Year 2022/2023.

Cllr. Knight asked if the Parish Council meeting dates could be moved to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in the month to allow the Parish Council to meet the deadline publishing dates for the Parish News.

The Clerk to e-mail Parish Councillors the dates for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in the month, with the exception of May which will remain as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday to allow a 4-week gap between the April and May meetings.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**• Queens Platinum Jubilee**

Cllr. Smith asked Parish Councillors if they wanted to do anything to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. The Parish Church will be holding their Fete on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June. and John Ellis informed Cllr. Smith that the Methodist Church intend to do some window displays in their Church to celebrate the event.

Cllr. Smith said that he was loath to organise a day event like the last jubilee celebrations, because it was spoilt by heavy rain during the day.

After discussion it was agreed to hold a fireworks event either on the Friday or Saturday and invite villagers to either bring their own picnic or ask the Scout Group to organise a barbeque on the sportsfield.

Cllr. Meischke agreed to look into the costings for a 10-minute firework event.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Cllr. Smith to speak to Richard Wing (Scout Group) about a barbeque.

**Action: M. Smith**

## 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 - Pavments	
None		None	
Payments			
ICO	Annual subscription		35.00
Frank Cooper & Son	Football pitch line marking on 19 <sup>th</sup> November		42.00
Emma Waltham	domain name release		12.00
Jane Allsop	Domain transfer to SiteGround		17.99
Wages and Salaries	December salary		1,295.83
Mark Steward	Website		150.00
Bidwells	Allotment rent - six months		381.34
HMRC	Tax & NI		253.06
Marmax	2 Rainbow picnic benches for play area		993.60
Allotment & Garden	Liability insurance		145.68
BT	phone calls		23.03
			<b>3,349.53</b>
Receipts			
Nationwide	Interest		17.37
Santander	Interest		0.22
			<b>17.59</b>
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Denise Newman – Pavilion hire	24.00	Lyn Oakman – hire cancellation	35.00
Floodlighting donations - 07.12.21-04.01.22	82.00	B&O – lock for outside storeroom	20.00
Tony Silverstri - Pavilion	96.00		<b>55.00</b>
Bowls – Main Hall	80.00		
Painting group – meet room – 4 weeks	40.00		
Youth Football – Main Hall	40.00		
	<b>362.00</b>		
Payments			
East Herts Council	Rates - 6 of 7		53.00
Wages	Cleaning		320.00
British Gas	Gas		124.05
HCC	cleaning materials		32.12
Wicksteed Leisure	work towards upgrading		7,435.50
British Gas	Electricity		148.18
Rosemary Brown	20 hours cleaning @ £10 per hour		200.00
HMRC	VAT return - November 2021		229.88
East Herts Council	Rates - 7 of 7		53.00
British Gas	Gas		144.00
HCC	Cleaning materials		119.58
Mark Blacktin	repair work to ramp on multi play and slide		320.00
			<b>9,179.31</b>
Receipts			
Stevenage Community	Grant towards paly area		2,000.00
Talbott Fitness	Use of toilet and changing room facilities		80.00
Santander	bank interest		0.09
Leila Connaughton	1st 50% deposit for hire on 29th Jan		37.50
Begonia Garcia	Pavilion hire + toys on 08.01.22		26.00
Kate Kasapoglu	1st 50% deposit for hire on 19th March		30.00
Lisa Hattersley	Main Hall & Pavilion hire - 12th Feb		60.00
			<b>2,233.59</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Approval and signing of Precept forms for 2022/23**

At its December 2021 meeting, the Parish Council agreed the provisional precept requirement for 2022/2023 were £38,490.

Parish Councillors agreed to formally adopt this figure and the Precept form was duly signed.

The completed precept form to be returned to East Herts Council.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **9-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**  
Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of the accounts on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The Parish Council and Community Hall continue to be very well funded.  
Both the Parish Council and Community Hall are showing an increase in funds since the start of the financial year.
- **9-monthly inspection of accounts**  
Cllr. McCash conducted the 9-month inspection of the accounts on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022, and they were in good order.

### Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Play area update**  
Cllr. Meischke said that he had been very pleased with the updates to the play area which segregates the senior equipment from the junior areas.  
However, he was very disappointed that the recent work done by Wicksteed Leisure did not pass the safety audit. Two clamps need tightening on the swings and the new Kompan swing was missing two caps. The most serious fault was the safety surface under the Kompan swings, which is too narrow by 50mm. Although, this fault will not be flagged as safety issue requiring modification, it will be raised as an issue each year in the annual playground inspection report. Wicksteed Leisure have been asked to rectify the problem and have agreed to do this free of any additional charges in exchange for two tubs of repair safety surface material, currently stored in the Community Hall.  
Due to changes that were made to the play area plans, the Kompan swings are now next to the planned entrance slope onto Church Walk. The slope entrance will have to be rethought and will probably run at the back of the proposed new car parking area. Cllrs. Smith and Meischke to discuss with Ben Storey whilst on site discussing other items. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**
- **Car park update**  
The large rubbish bin at the corner of the play area where the 4-bay swings used to be, has been relocated near the tennis courts.  
Hertfordshire Planning Services have put together a robust plan for the new car park and will be submitting an application to the planning department. The Parish Council benefits from a 50% rate for all planning applications.  
Cllr. Waltham restated that she is not in favour of the car park extension and would be objecting to the planning application. Cllr. Smith reminded her that she can only do so on a personal basis.
- **Caretaker job description and add**  
Cllrs. Meischke and Stock need to meet to draw up a job description. **Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock**
- **Tennis egress lights**  
D. P. Electric will be installing a brighter egress light and extending the time the light stays on within the next week.
- **First Aid kit update**  
Cllr. Jancey said that the medium sized first aid refill had arrived, and additional items required are now on order. She has reorganised the first aid box and included a list of expiry dates for each item. The facemask she has clipped to the inside of the box.
- **Annual emergency lighting and PAT testing and 5-year electrical inspection**  
D. P. Electric have carried out the lighting, electrical and PAT testing checks. Remedial work required will be carried-out next week, including PAT testing Parish Council equipment housed at the Clerk's home.
- **Electric car charging point**  
Cllr. Meischke said that EHDC are considering grant funding for electric car charging points. He said he had put the Community Hall forward as a possible candidate. The hall has a 3-phase electrical system, which is ideal for car charging. EHDC grants would be for a double charging point, and this would need to be sited adjacent to the Community Hall nearest to the external boiler cupboard. Two car parking spaces would also need to be created and the grant should cover this work.

Cllr. Hammon left the meeting at 2112.

- **Water / Gas / Electric suppliers**  
The gas and electricity contracts are up for renewal during April 2022. The Clerk has been contacted by the broker the Trustees have used for the last three renewals asking if he can obtain renewal prices for the Community Hall.  
It was agreed that the Clerk can obtain renewal prices, however with the current energy prices being extremely high and the risk that Russia may soon invade Ukraine, it may be best for the Community Hall Trustees to allow the energy contracts to lapse and wait for the prices to settle later this year.

- **Trustees meeting arrange**

Cllr. Meischke said he would arrange a meeting of the Trustees after he meets with Cllr. Stock re the caretaker job description and Sports Club meeting.

**Action: J. Meischke**

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

Cllr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **Tennis court problems**

Some problems at the tennis courts.

1. Some few weeks ago a lady with a youngster playing with scooter on court was very abusive when told to leave.
2. On 9<sup>th</sup> Jan, a man with youngster playing football again were told to leave. The man was very abusive and threatened to burn the nets.

Cllr. Knight said he realises these are hardly major incidents but referred these issues to the Police (PCSO Sally Brooks) for the record.

## **Environment Sub-Committee**

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

The allotment site is looking generally very good for the time of year and the repairs to the entrance road have made a huge difference.

Currently, there is one vacant plot and one person from Dane End on the waiting list. Parish Councillors agreed that ideally villagers should have priority over non-villagers. However, as there is only one person on the waiting list, the Dane End applicant should be invited to take on the last remaining allotment.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Hedge along Church Walk**

The hedge between the allotments and Church Walk needs reducing in height. Some allotment holders have items, such as sheds, right up against the hedge. As the hedge grows up it also grows out over the top of any items leaning against the hedge. In autumn 2021, whilst the hedge was being cut from the Church Walk side, an allotment shed got destroyed because it was not visible. Item 10 of the allotment tenancy agreement, which has been signed by all allotment holders, states; 'Where applicable to maintain the boundary hedge bordering Church Walk in a neat and tidy manner and maintain a 1-metre-wide clear area along Glebe Court hedge boundary.'

It was agreed to write to all allotment holders informing them that the Parish Council will be arranging for the height of the Allotment hedge along its boundary with Church Walk to be lowered and explain the reasons why. They will also be asked to stop leaning things up against the hedge and leave sufficient gap to allow them to maintain their boundary hedge.

**Action: C. Dinnin/J. Allsop**

- **Cottage Site**

As no response has been received, it was agreed that the Clerk should resend the Parish Council's letter re Japanese Knotweed to the owners of the Crowbury

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Beane cottage**

Cllrs. Smith and Dinnin met up with Mr. Sell (Beane Cottage) and discussed the Laurel hedge at the rear of the Parish Council land. Parish Councillors agreed that Adam Welch be asked to quote for cutting the hedge and some tree branches that need removing.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

Mr. Sell is interested in purchasing the Parish Council owned land that he has an agreement to fence off and use as part of his garden. This agreement is up for renewal in August 2025. This strip of land is between the river and the top of the riverbank, from the Beane Cottage boundary to the River Beane bridge on Walkern Road. Mr. Sell has offered £2,500 for the land.

There may be a complication in that the area in question was part of Beane Cottage holding. It was agreed that as a condition of planning that area would be transferred to the Parish Council to 'preserve openness of the area' and in fact that openness has to a degree been obstructed by it being enclosed by hedges and fences. The Parish Council has now acquired cutting the boundary hedge, which was originally planted by the previous owners of Beane Cottage for their privacy, and they used to maintain it.

After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed that double this figure would be acceptable plus all legal fees to be paid by Mr. Sell. Cllr. Smith to contact Mr. Sell accordingly.

**Action: M. Smith**

- **Overgrown Ivy hedge on Great Innings footpath**

Iain Harris has been in touch about this tree/hedge that runs along the boundary of his property. Cllr. Smith said that the quickest solution would be to get Adam Welch to cut it. He agreed to inspect the hedge and see if he can find out if it is HCC or EHDC owned.

**Action: M. Smith**



**b) Routine Reports****i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests**

Cllr. Meischke to carry-out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests in the next week.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Cllr. Meischke continues to inspect the hall regularly including running the water every 2-3 weeks 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. Knight completed the report on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022. He said that the village looks in very good condition and only had two observations to make.

- The grass at the top of the sportsfield, beyond the cricket square, is quite long.
- It is quite difficult to see the green light on the defibrillator which indicates it is working correctly.

A copy of Cllr. Knight's report to be e-mailed to all Parish Councillors.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**vi) Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

**vii) Weekly defibrillator inspection**

None.

**viii) Website/Facebook**

Refer to 5 c, Action points resolved- Upload all relevant files to Neighbourhood Plan section of the website

**ix) Highway issues**

Refer to 7 d, Specific items - A602 improvement scheme.

**x) Dog fouling reports**

None.

**xi) Police reports**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of PCSO Sally Brook's police report dated 17<sup>th</sup> January.

**9. Correspondence received****a) EHDC – notice of registrable interest**

Michael Aves (EHDC Democratic Services Officer) e-mailed on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 stating that the Monitoring Officer had found that Town and Parish Councillors have not been asked to declare any 'other registerable interests' on their Register of Interests form.

He issued the Parish Council with new forms, and these have completed by all Watton-at-Stone Parish Councillors and the Clerk has e-mailed copies of these documents to Mr. Aves.

**10. Village organisations**

None.

**11. Items for Parish News**

Cllr. Waltham said that an article will appear in next month's issue of the Parish News (February) concerning Regulation 14.

**The meeting closed at 2140.**

**The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022.**