

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: None.

### 2. Public participation

None.

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

None

### 4. Declaration of interests

Cllr. McCash declared pecuniary interest in item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee – Grass cutting and hedge maintenance contracts (one of the contractors is a client of McCash and Hay).

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022**  
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**  
This item is ongoing. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**
2. **Draw up job description for a caretaker**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – Caretaker.
3. **Investigate website upgrade options**  
Cllr. Smith suggested that the Parish Council form a small sub-committee to discuss the way forward for the Parish Council website.  
Cllrs. Meischke and Waltham had a discussion on the subject prior to this meeting. Cllr. Waltham said that she remains concerned that should anything happen to the Clerk there is nobody available who could update/maintain the website apart from Beanebytes, who would not want to do this work. She suggested that an audit is performed to identify simplifying the site so that it is easy to upload documents and change pages. She has been given the name of someone, who comes well recommended, that could do this work for about £200. The current website is designed around WordPress and is quite complicated to update, although it should be very easy.  
This action was agreed by Parish Councillors and the work should be done after Regulation 14 has been completed.  
Cllr. Waltham to arrange for this work to be done in the new Civic Year, May 2022. **Action: E. Waltham**  
This item to be put on the agenda for May 2022. **Agenda: 05/2022**
4. **Look into the costings for a firework event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum jubilee**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – Jubilee.
5. **Speak to Richard Wing (Scout Group) about a Platinum Jubilee event barbeque**  
Cllr. Smith said had spoken to Richard Wing and the Scout Group would be happy to organise a barbeque on the sportsfield for the Platinum Jubilee event.
6. **Contact Mr. Sell re Parish Council land adjacent to his property**  
Refer to item 7 h, Specific items - Land adjacent to Beane Cottage.
7. **Inspect the hedge that runs along the Grey House boundary and find out if it is HCC or EHDC owned**  
Cllr. Smith said that District Cllr. Sophie Bell reported this overgrown hedge to EHDC. It has now been identified as an HCC responsibility and they have agreed that a significant amount of work does need doing.  
This item to remain on the agenda. **Agenda: 03/22**

#### c) Action points resolved

1. Reimburse Cllr. Smith for items purchased
2. Write to planning department re application for Heath Mount School
3. Arrange a Trustees meeting to discuss Sports Clubs
4. Meet with Ben Storey to discuss various items on the sportsfield
5. Inspect the bike ramps to see how much work is involved to remove them

6. E-mail Parish Councillors options for Civic meetings dates for year 2022/2023
7. E-mail completed precept form to East Herts Council
8. Arrange for allotment applicant to see vacant plot
9. E-mail all allotment holders concerning hedge that runs along Church Walk
10. Re-send letter about Japanese Knotweed near the Cottage site
11. Ask Adam Welch to cut Laurel hedge adjacent to Beane Cottage
12. E-mail a copy of Ian Knight's monthly village-report to all Parish Councillors

## 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 and no comment responses were agreed.

#### i) 20 High Street (3/21/3198/HH)

Hip to gable roof with insertion of two dormer windows to front and repositioning of dormer to rear. Single storey infill extension to front. Replacement single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestration with insertion of window to side elevation

#### ii) Gregor's Farm (3/22/0150/FUL)

Construction of agricultural barn, with associated access road and hardstanding areas

#### iii) Heath Mount School, Woodhall Park (3/21/3092/FUL)

First floor side extension and infill to provide additional classroom with external staircase

The following planning application was received after the agenda was published.

#### • Watton-at-Stone Community Sports Hall, School Lane (3/22/0277/FUL)

Car park extension

The Clerk to write to the planning department stating that as the Parish Council is the applicant, they cannot comment on the above application.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### b) Decisions

#### i) Land at St Andrews and St Marys Church, Church Lane (3/21/2921/FUL)

Change of use of 7 metres of grazing land to burial land

- EHDC permission granted

#### ii) 48 Great Innings North (3/21/3069/HH)

Conversion of garage to habitable space

- EHDC permission granted

The following decision notice was received after the agenda was published.

#### • 20 High Street (3/21/2690/HH)

Alterations to front elevation to convert the existing hip roof to a gable roof with new window to front first floor

- EHDC permission refused

#### • 8 Beane Road (3/21/1608/HH)

First floor rear extension, single storey side infill extension under the car port and alterations to front porch roof

- EHDC permission granted

The following application has been withdrawn, although no formal notification has been received from EHDC.

#### • Watton Mill, Mill Lane (3/21/2834/FUL)

Refurbish and reinstatement of building for office B1 use, reinstating window openings, amendment to window openings, infill window openings with brickwork and removal of external steps. Erection of an additional storey roof addition to create second floor level. Reinstatement of car parking spaces, introduce new car parking bays and cycle parking bays. Retaining the existing fabric and landscape.

**-Application withdrawn**

Parish Councillors noted that work on the Mill site appears to have ceased and the premises is boarded up again.

## 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

Cllr. Waltham said that we are still in the process of running the Regulation 14 consultation, which ends on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

Cllr. Smith said that he and Charles Clark are moving forward with the proposed youth football ground at Mill Lane and hope to apply for a EHDC Locality grant of £15,000. However, this must be submitted by 25<sup>th</sup> February and will require project evidence base to back up the application. Cllr. Smith said if we miss this round of funding there may not be another funding option. The projected estimated cost to install two pitches has come in at £150,000.

Cllr. Smith said he had met with Lindsay Holt, and she informed him that she is leaving the Woodhall Estate on 1st June. In the meantime, she would continue to work on any issues concerning the Neighbourhood Plan and Woodhall Estate proposed development land. She is happy for the Parish Council to arrange for soil

sampling and contour mapping to be done on the Mill Lane site. This work will cost approximately £4,500 to complete. Cllr. Smith said that if we have any hopes or expectations of developing the Mill Lane site this work needs to be done. It would also add to the evidence base required for the Locality grant application.

The Parish Council agreed it would like to gain a degree of certainty about the Mill Lane land lease and so would like to enter into an 'option for a lease,' to become exercisable once the Green Belt release has taken place. Cllr. McCash said that she knows of a solicitor who specialises in options and is happy to speak to them to find out if they can help us. This was agreed. Cllr. Hammon to e-mail Cllr. McCash a copy of the memorandum of understanding letter she produced.

**Action: H. McCash/C. Hammon**

Cllr. Smith asked Parish Councillors for their approval to obtain a quotation for the preparatory soil sampling and survey work. This was agreed by all present.

Once the work is done, it would enable the Parish Council to go out to tender. If the company who is producing the preparatory quote are awarded the contract for producing two football pitches, they would refund the price of their site survey work. Further tenders would have to take this into account.

**c) Sports Clubs**

The Community Hall Trustees, Cllr. Smith and the Clerk met on 27<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the Sports Clubs.

It was agreed that from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, the Parish Council and Community Hall will take over charging the individual sports clubs (namely: Cricket, Men's Football, Ladies Football and Tennis Clubs) for hiring the sportsfield and Community Hall facilities instead of invoicing the Sports and Social Club collectively.

Cllr. Knight has produced a break-down of how the different clubs are charged and this formula will be used when invoicing the different clubs.

**d) A602 improvement scheme**

Cllr. Meischke said that after all the promises made from the A602 improvement team for items to benefit the village, it looks as though all we will get out of it is one dog bin, which they will not even pay to install.

Cllr. Meischke said that the A602/A119 roundabout is due to be closed from Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February at 0630 to Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February at 0500 and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March at 0630 to Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March February at 0500.

Mardlebury Road (between Datchworth and Woolmer Green) will also be closed for a period of three weeks during this time. However, they have agreed to keep the road open on a traffic light system during the two weekends that the A602/A119 roundabout is closed.

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

Cllr. Smith said that further to his report last month that Cllr. Crofton advised that the footpath needs to be cleared, he has now been given the contact details for Andrew Betts of North Herts DC who provides a service which would include path clearance for EHDC. Mr. Betts has confirmed that he will in due course look at this footpath.

This item to remain on the agenda until resolved.

**Agenda: 03/2022**

**f) Memorial seats**

The two memorial seats, in memory of John Waring and Andrew Dalrymple, have been installed in front of the large Oak tree and overlooking the cricket and football pitches.

Donations toward these seats have been received from the Watton Wheelers and Deirdre Dalrymple. Both parties have e-mailed thanks to the Parish Council for arranging the purchase and installation of the seats.

**g) Speed signs**

Cllr. Smith said 'The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire' have said that Watton-at-Stone qualify sufficiently to move on to a formal application. Cllr. Smith thanked Cllr. Stock for completing the application form, which has now been submitted.

**h) Land adjacent to Beane Cottage**

Cllr. Smith said that he has drafted a letter to Mr. Sell re Parish Council land adjacent to his property. This letter will be sent out in the next few days.

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

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

It was agreed that Parish Council meetings shall be held on the second Tuesday in the month, except for the May 2022 meeting which will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday and December 2022, which will be on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday. The Parish Council also plan to go back to their earlier meeting times in the meeting room, starting at 1900 for the May meeting and 1915 from then onwards.

• Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	• Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
• Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	• Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
• Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	• Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
• No meeting in August 2022	• Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
• Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	• Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
• Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	• Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> April 2023

The Parish Council meeting in May 2022, will be preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

**j) Ferreting licenses**

Bob Adams was issued with the following ferreting licenses in 2020 and these expired on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

- the Lammas
- the paddock at the far end of the Lammas
- Allotment
- Watton Green
- Cottage site at Watton Green

It was agreed to ask Bob Adams if he would like to renew the ferreting licenses.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**k) License across cottage site**

Parish Councillors agreed to renew the licence for Temporary Access across the Land known as the "Old Cottage Site", at Watton Green, issued to Mr. Denis E. Filer (of Brambles, Watton Green).

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

**l) First aid course**

In November 2021, the following article was placed on Facebook and on the News page of our website.

“POTENTIAL FIRST AID COURSE AT THE NIGEL POULTON COMMUNITY HALL?

In 2019 the Parish Council ran a successful half day first aid and defibrillator training course for 12 villagers. They would like to gauge interest in running another course in 2022.

This would be a certificated recognised course and the cost would be around £15-£20 per person.”

Cllr. Jancey said that 22 people had shown an interest in attending a first Aid course. She suggested that we run two courses, one in the morning and one in the afternoon and use the same company, On Site First Aid Training, as last time. This was agreed by all Parish Councillors. It was suggested that the course is run in April or May this year. Once the Cricket Club fixtures are known a weekend date to be arranged and the Football Club notified that the sportsfield facilities will not be available on that date.

**Action: K. Jancey/J. Allsop**

**8. Reports****a) Sub-Committees****Budget & Finance**

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

<b>Watton-at-Stone Parish Council</b>			
<b>Petty Cash –</b>		<b>Petty cash - Payments</b>	
None		None	
<b>Payments</b>			
Govresources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan - consultation work		1,800.00
Wages and salaries	January 2022		1,285.83
Fred Burnell	pest control on the Allotments		144.00
Frank Cooper & Community Hall	Football pitch line marking on 7th & 24th January 2022		84.00
Glasdon UK Ltd	NHB funds for Wicksteed play area upgrade		20138.23
Amazon UK	2 memorial seats (John Waring & Andrew Dalrymple)		1,839.72
	Logitech cordless computer mouse		34.99
			<b>25,326.77</b>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Nationwide	Interest		17.38
Santander	Interest		0.20
Watton Wheelers	donation -John Waring memorial seat		866.55
Deirdre Dalrymple	donation -Andrew Dalrymple memorial seat		866.55
			<b>1750.68</b>
<b>Watton-at-Stone Community Hall</b>			
<b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>		<b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>	
		Two keys	15.00
			<b>15.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>			
D P Electrics	5-year electrical, annual emergency & PAT resting		680.00
Sports Courts UK	pressure clean and moss kill 3 x tennis courts		1,194.00
LampShop online	- 11 lamps - 16w 2pin 2d		40.36
Wages	January 2022		230.00
British Gas	Electricity		110.82
Wicksteed Leisure			16,730.38
HCC	cleaning materials		8.78
			<b>18,994.34</b>

<b>Receipts</b>		
Lisa Hattersley	Main Hall & Pavilion hire - 12th Feb	60.00
Janine Gildersleve	Main Hall & Pavilion hire - 22nd Jan	45.00
Leila Connaughton	2nd payment for hire on 29th Jan	37.50
Michelle Stenson	1st 50% deposit for hire - 13th March	22.50
Vicki Stanlev	1st 50% deposit for hire - 5th March	22.50
HMRC	VAT rebate for 12.01.2021	1,090.24
Santander	bank interest	0.08
Janine Gildersleve	Main Hall	581.87
Cricket Club	paid into wrong account owe PC	1,050.00
Katherine Roberts-		30.00
Peter Khera	Main Hall	193.80
Talbott Fitness	Use of toilet and changing room facilities	140.00
Parish Council	NHB grant for play area upgrade	20,138.23
Paula Sutton	Main Hall	205.20
		<b>23,616.92</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Annual review of documents**

- **Financial Regulations**

Parish Councillors reviewed the 'Financial regulations' document, dated February 2021, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2022 and uploaded to the website.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Risk Assessment and Financial Management**

Parish Councillors reviewed the 'Risk Assessment and Financial Management' document dated February 2021. This document to be re-dated February 2022 and uploaded to the website.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Review Asset registers**

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

- **Long term capital expenditures**

Cllr. Block said that this document is currently being updated.

## **Community Hall Trustees**

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Energy supplier**

Cllr. Meischke said that the Clerk had obtained prices from John Molnar a broker at Business Utility Renewals Ltd for British Gas Lite (our current supplier), Opus Energy, Smartest Energy and Pozitive Energy. Although the prices for British Gas lite were not the lowest, Cllrs. Meischke and Block felt it was best in this current energy crisis to stay with them and take out a 3-year contract. This was agreed by Parish Councillors. The Clerk was instructed to accept the prices obtained by John Molnar, which were lower than going direct to British Gas Lite.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Water**

It was agreed to look at obtaining new water contracts for both the Parish Council and Community Hall.

**Action: M. Smith**

- **Bike ramps**

The bike ramps have been removed and are awaiting disposal.

- **Play Equipment**

The remedial work required on the toddler swings at the play area has been completed. The safety surface area has been extended to comply with regulations, the two clamps tightened, and the missing caps installed.

- **Caretaker**

Cllrs. Meischke and Stock have been working on a draft job description for a caretaker. When completed, they will e-mail it to all Trustees.

**Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock**

Cllr. McCash offered to help in drawing up a contract when required.

- **First Aid kit**

Cllr. Jancey said that the additional items required for the first aid kit have now been installed in the first aid box. She has updated the list of expiry dates for each item and a copy of this is also in the box.

She suggested that when the 6-month check is done that the list is checked against what is in the first aid box and replacements ordered for missing or out of date items.

- **Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

Cllr. Meischke said he had investigated having a band play on the sportsfield after the Church fete finishes on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June. He contacted four groups and local band Sofasonic, would be available to play on that date. The drummer, Eliot Manarin, is an ex-local whose family still live in the village.

Cllr. Meischke to meet with Eliot to discuss the options and pricing.

**Action: J. Meischke**

The Scout and Guide Group have agreed to run the barbeque and Cllr. Meischke said that the fete car park will be available for those attending the Parish Council event.

Cllr. Meischke said that a ten-minute firework display would cost around £2,500. However, due to the time of year, the event would not be able to take place until it was dark at around 2200 and suggested that this would be too late for younger children.

Cllr. Hammon said she would keep her children up to watch a firework display at this time of night.

Parish Councillors agreed to see if we can have both a band and firework display if the costings allow us.

- **Electric tests**

D. P. Electrics, who carried out the lighting, 5-year electrical and PAT testing checks, have completed all remedial work required, including PAT testing Parish Council equipment kept at the Clerk's home.

## Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight did not have anything to report.

## Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin provided the following report.

- **Allotments**

All plots are now let, and an e-mail has been sent out re the hedge running along Church Walk.

Cllr. Smith said that this work will now be done in October. A further e-mail to be sent to allotment holders telling them that they need to keep a clear one-meter gap between their plot and the hedge and cannot store items in this area.

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

- **Beane Cottage**

Adam Welch has quoted £80 for cutting back the Laurel hedge at the rear of the Parish Council land, on its boundary with Beane Cottage. However, the work has not yet been done.

- **Cottage site**

The Clerk has sent another letter to the owners of the Crowbury re Japanese Knotweed on their land, but no response has been received. Cllr. Smith agreed to try and contact them.

**Action: M. Smith**

- **Grass cutting and hedge maintenance contracts**

Cllr. McCash left the room while this item was discussed.

Cllr. Smith said that he had obtained two quotations for the grass and hedge cutting works in 2022 as follows.

- Frank Cooper & Son Limited £2,970 plus VAT
- Stanley Agricultural £2,690 plus VAT

The work is as follows.

- **The Lammas**

Flail cut the grass 3 times per year in May, July and October

To side arm headland and riverbank in October

- **Watton Green**

Flail cut the grass 2 times per year in July and October

To side arm headland and roadside ditch in October

- **Sportsfield**

To cut sportsfield hedges in August/September by the return to school

To cut Church walk and Allotment hedge both side in September/October (excluding Glebe Court Section)

- **Allotment Area**

Flail cut allotment area 2 times per year in June and September

It was agreed to accept the quotation from Stanley Agricultural.

Both contractors to be notified accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Cllr. McCash returned to the meeting.

- **Repair work required to the Lammas steps**

The repair work to Lammas Steps is still outstanding. Cllr. Dinnin agreed to contact Tony Bradford again to see if he can get a team of volunteers to do the repair work. If this is not possible then the Parish Council will arrange to get the work done.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

The Woodhall Estate have done a huge amount of tree work along the path on their land from the steps to the field opposite Walkern Road. Currently it looks a bit bare, however this will soon all grow back again.

Cllr. Waltham said that maintenance work needs to be undertaken on the Millennium Walk where it goes through the woods on the other side of the riverbank to Rivershill. Some steps and a railing are now unsafe.

Cllrs. Dinnin and Smith to look at the area and decide what action should be taken.

**Action: C. Dinnin/M. Smith**

- **Litterpick group**

Cllr. Meischke said that a group of young people, accompanied by adults, have been doing litterpicking in the village towards their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Cllr. Meischke gave them the 10 litter pickers purchased last year on loan, however, at least 6 of these are now broken.

The Clerk to obtain prices for 10 litter pickers.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## **b) Routine Reports**

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

Cllr. Meischke continues to carry-out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests on a monthly basis. He also 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. McCash completed the report on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and said that the village looks very good.

The sportsfield was a bit muddy due to the recent weather conditions.

A copy of Cllr. McCash's has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors.

### **vi) Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

### **vii) Weekly defibrillator inspection**

None.

### **viii) Website/Facebook**

None.

### **ix) Highway issues**

None.

### **x) Dog fouling reports**

None.

### **xi) Police reports**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed PCSO Sally Brook's police report dated 15<sup>th</sup> February.

## **9. Correspondence received**

### **a) Letter from Bidwells re St. Albans Diocesan Board of Finance – Tree Maintenance**

Bidwells have written to remind the Parish Council of their obligation to look after trees on land they rent from the Diocesan Board. The Parish Council already adhere to this obligation

## **10. Village organisations**

- **War Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Cllr. Stock said that he attended a meeting of the committee on 1st February and that things appear to remain in good order.

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

It was agreed to put a notice about the Parish Council's plans for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in the April 2022 issue of the Parish News.

**Action: J. Meischke**

**The meeting closed at 2131.**

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