

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 12 July 2022

Present:	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chair)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon	Cllr. Kay Jancey
	Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr. David Stock
	Cllr. Emma Waltham	Clerk: Jane Allsop
Public:	Roger and Jean Tomlinson (until 17:43), Stuart Coulson (until 17:43), Kaine Joel	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Helen McCash.

2. Public participation

Cllr. Smith welcomed members of the public to the meeting

- Kaine Joel said he was attending the meeting to see how the Parish Council worked.
- Roger and Jean Tomlinson wanted to discuss with the Parish Council, its letter to them of 6th July regarding their overgrown plots. In the letter they were asked to give up plot 8b with immediate effect and clear plot 3b.
Jean Thomlinson outlined the reasons why she had not been attending to her plot and after discussion with Parish Councillors it was agreed that she could retain both plots and the Parish Council would review the situation again in September, before the allotment renewals go out. **Action: Parish Councillors**
- Mr. Coulson said he wanted Parish Councillors to be aware that his planning application at 62 Hazeldell includes an extra parking place. He said that the Parish Council's letter to EHDC was incorrect in that it states, "it appears that an off-road parking space will be lost". Parish Councillors agreed that there was no need to write a further letter to EHDC as the comment about parking is only observational and will be checked by planners anyway.

Roger and Jean Tomlinson and Stuart Coulson left the meeting.

3. Chair's/Clerk's report

None.

4. Declaration of interests

Cllr. Smith declared a personal interest in item 6 a, Planning – additional planning application received after the agenda was received for 38 Rivershill (his daughter lives at the adjacent property).

5. Minutes of the last meeting.

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 14 June 2022**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

- 1) **Investigate further article re minimising dog fouling**
Cllr. Meischke said that he had not had time to investigate this further.
It was agreed that dog fouling in the village is currently very minimal. However, a lot of the dog fouling notices have disappeared over time and it was agreed to obtain some new appropriate signage. This should be available from EHDC. Cllr. Smith said he would investigate. **Action: M. Smith**
- 2) **Send invoice to Mr & Mrs Sell re use of Parish Council land adjacent to Beane Cottage**
Refer to item 7 f, Specific items – Parish Council land adjacent to Beane Cottage.

c) Action points resolved

1. Contact EHDC enforcement re regular traffic warden visits

The Clerk e-mailed EHDC on 13th June as follows.

“We are experience serious parking problems in the High Street in Watton-at-Stone.

People are ignoring the restricted parking times of 8-9 am and 5-6 pm on the yellow lines outside the stretch of road in front of the Bull pub down past the village shops. Drivers are parking their vehicles right up to number 101 High Street near the pelican crossing, which is not in the restricted area. This latter area is a newish problem in the village and makes progress down the High Street even worse.

In addition, children and the elderly crossing the road to get to the village shops is becoming more dangerous by the day.

Could you please arrange for the traffic wardens to make several visits, preferably close together, during the restricted parking times. Then follow this up with fortnightly visits, in the hope of deterring the offending drivers.”

To date only an automated response has been received from EHDC.

Cllr. Jancey said that the restriction sign is exceedingly small, and the yellow lines are now badly worn, plus with no enforcement, people do not take any notice of the restrictions.

Cllr. Smith said he would contact District Cllr. Sophie Bell requesting traffic warden visits. The Clerk originally e-mailed Cllr. Bell on this subject on 18th May.

Action: M Smith

2. Arrange meeting to discuss High Street traffic issues
3. Write to planning department re 20 High Street (3/22/1147/HH)
4. Write to planning department re Highfields, Whempstead (3/22/1166/FUL)
5. Write to planning department re 78 Hazeldell (3/22/1184/HH)
6. Meet with County Cllr. Crofton re Hockerill footpath and path from Bull car park to Rivershill
7. Contact Pat Brett before accepting Adam Welch’s quotation to cut back hedge along Hockerill footpath
8. Submit Highways fault re overgrown hedge on footpath from Glebe Close to Church Lane
9. E-mail annual return and all relevant documentation to PKF
10. Secure five aside goal post to the ground
11. Chase contractors re quotations for goal mouth repairs
12. Obtain quotations for six large tables for the Community Hall
13. Send Sports Courts deposit payment for tennis court resurfacing
14. Contact Frank Cooper & Son re strimming under benches
15. Submit Cllr. Smith’s article re Platinum Jubilee to the Parish News

6. Planning

a) Applications

i) 62 Hazeldell (3/22/1194/HH)

Single storey front extension and existing flat roof to be replaced with a pitched roof to match adjacent property

Cllr. Smith visited the neighbours at 60 Hazeldell. Following e-mail consultation with Parish Councillors, the following response was sent to EHDC.

‘The PC believes that extending forward of the building line to this extent is unprecedented in Hazeldell and will be overbearing and detrimental to the enjoyment of the attached neighbour.

Furthermore, it appears that an off-road parking space will be lost.’

Refer also to final paragraph of item 2 Public participation.

The following planning applications were received after the agenda was published.

• 38 Rivershill (3/22/1322/HH)

Demolition of ground floor rear extension. Construction of single storey and first floor rear extension. Alterations to fenestration. New roof lights on front elevation

Cllr. Smith had asked Cllr. Waltham to deal with this planning application because his daughter owns the adjacent property. He agreed to e-mail his daughter the planning application details so, if she has any problems with it, she can consult with Cllr. Waltham.

Parish Councillors had no objection to this application.

Action: E. Waltham

• Blue Hill Villa, Walkern Road (3/22/1409/HH)

Erection of summer house (2018) and garden store (1932) (retrospective)

Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response. The Clerk to notify EHDC accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

None

7. Specific items

a) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

Cllr. Waltham reported as follows.

The NP consultation comments have now all been reviewed, and the draft plan has been revised accordingly. The NP group is now reviewing the finalised report and once that review is completed and any amendments made, they will ask the PC to approve the plan as ready for submission for Regulation 15. Before submitting the Plan to EHDC however, the NP group would like to see progress regarding the key benefits of releasing Green Belt, i.e., a written agreement with the Woodhall Estate regarding the provision of football pitches and agreement from the Environment Agency that they will not object to the planned footbridge.

Cllr. Smith agreed to arrange a meeting with the Woodhall Estate.

Action: M. Smith

Cllrs. Waltham and Hammon agreed to progress producing a Heads of Terms document regarding a lease of land for the football pitches and liaise with Fairview to arrange a meeting with the Environment Agency.

Action: E. Waltham/C. Hammon

b) Hockerill footpath behind the George and Dragon public house

Cllr. Smith said that he met with County Councillor Ken Crofton on site to look at the footpath behind the George and Dragon public house, which runs from the railings by old School Orchard up to the railings set at the entrance to Hockerill. Cllr. Crofton further agreed to fund the resurfacing of this section of footpath from his locality budget.

c) Footpath link from the Bull car park to Rivershill

Whilst in the village, Cllr. Smith said that Cllr. Crofton was shown the footpath link from the Bull car park to Rivershill. This footpath is an unadopted with no known ownership and technically people are using it at their own risk. Cllr. Crofton agreed that it was not a satisfactory situation and has arranged for a rights of way officer to meet him on site tomorrow. Cllr. Smith said that he would attend this on-site meeting.

Action: M. Smith

d) Overgrown hedge along the Hockerill footpath

Cllr. Dinnin confirmed that the overgrown hedges along Hockerill footpath have been cut back.

e) Speed signs

Cllr. Smith said that due to a clerical error, we have missed the latest round of funding. However, our application will be submitted in the second round which is due in October 2022.

f) Parish Council land adjacent to Beane Cottage

Mr. & Mrs. Sell to be invoiced for use of Parish Council land adjacent to their property at the beginning of August.

Action: J. Allsop

g) High Street traffic issues

Cllr. Jancey said that the parking bay opposite the Bull PH is overgrown. She contacted Jenifer Sanderson from the Woodhall Estate who has agreed to have the overgrowth cut back. She has also asked her to arrange the cutting of the hedging overhanging the High Street footpath from School Lane up to the George and Dragon car park entrance. Cllr. Dinnin said that the Woodhall estate arrange for this hedge cutting to be done each year, so hopefully they will cut it back soon.

Cllr. Stock said that in the June Parish Council minutes it refers to a 'small committee' of two or three Parish Councillors to pursue the High Street issues, in fact it should have read a 'Working Group'. This group now comprises Cllr. Jancey (the lead), Cllr. Hammon, Cllr. Stock, Cllr. Meischke and Cllr. Dinnin.

Once again it was agreed that although we need to protect the commercial activities in the High Street, the increasing problems related to parking and traffic flow/behaviour continue to cause much concern. The Working Group is to formulate a plan to address the issues and establish contact with HCC to discuss the problems and possible solutions to ease the situation (e.g., a return to the original and bolt-hole scheme).

Action: Working Group

Cllr. Smith said that Cllr. Crofton has agreed to look into Crumbs' request to have the concrete bollards removed from outside their premises. This would give them sufficient room to allow for several narrow tables and chairs to be located along the pavement, whilst allowing enough room for wheelchair and pushchair users to pass.

h) Parking in Rectory Lane

It was agreed at the November 2021 meeting to defer looking at the problem of people continuing to park on the grassed area in Rectory Lane and the possibility of additional parking in this area until July/September 2022.

Parish Councillors agreed to defer this item again until the February 2023 meeting.

Agenda:

02/2023

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
Payments		
Frank Cooper & Son	Grass cutting on 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th May	312.00
Michael Wilson	Sofasonic - Platinum Jubilee entertainment	400.00
Frank Cooper & Son	Maintenance work including strimming, mowing, pruning	240.00
Bidwells	Allotment rent - 6 months	381.34
M. J. Smith	The Metal Store -railings for ramp near play area	860.98
M. J. Smith	Skip hire -	280.00
Knudge	1st Call signs - posters and artwork for Station 40th anniversary	52.80
M. J. Smith	Skip hire – additional cost	150.00
Adam Welch	£1,450 - ½ maintenance, £90 hedge cut, £60 branch on Watton Green	1,600.00
Wages and salaries	June 2022	1,057.64
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – June 2022	50.40
HMRC	Tax & NI - April - June 2022	281.64
J. Allsop	BT phone bill - 28th June 2022	23.09
Concord Trophies	Perpetual and keep sake trophies and engraving	49.90
Frank Cooper & Son	Grass cutting on 10th & 24th June	156.00
Watton at Stone PCC	Bunting for jubilee	58.70
		5,954.49
Receipts		
Nationwide	Interest for period 01.4.22 to 30.04.22	40.44
Santander	Interest on deposit account	1.68
Tennis Club	Use of sportsfield facilities	419.00
Cricket Club	Use of sportsfield facilities	586.00
		1047.12
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion	15.00	
Art Club – Meeting room	48.00	
Archery – Main Hall	90.00	
Table tennis	80.00	
	233.00	
Payments		
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 3 of 10	73.00
Sports Courts	Deposit for tennis court resurfacing	6,477.90
HCC	Black bin bags	24.90
Wages	June 2022	283.50
D. P Electrics	Supply & fit 5 new led censor lights, inside and outside sockets	560.00
Castle Water	Supply and disposal charges	193.00
British gas	Gas	22.03
British gas	Electricity	114.52
		7,748.85
Receipts		
Ben Talbott Fitness	May and June use of toilets and changing rooms	180.00
Kirsty Stacey	Main Hall and Pavilion	36.00
C. Saint-Bryan	Pavilion hire – deposit for December 2022	22.50
Ildiko Imre Kada	Meeting room	168.00
Tanya Baser	Deposit	20.00
HMRC	VAT rebate - May 2022	1,163.02
Santander	Bank interest	0.83
		1,590.35

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **3-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

The first quarter accounts for the Parish Council show an increase in reserves of £19,107.91. This is largely due to receipt of the Groundwork Trust Grant. Expenditure on the Jubilee celebrations came in £3,790. It is suggested that this comes out of the New Homes Bonus funds. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.

The first quarter accounts for the Community Hall show a decrease in reserves of £8,090.84. This is largely due to the payment of the deposit for the tennis court resurfacing (£5,398.25) and maintenance (£1,855). The Parish Council will reimburse part of the deposit payment from the New Homes Bonus funds. The remaining

comes from the £1,000 set aside last year plus £3,000 in this budget. The Community Hall is yet to receive its half year grant from the Parish Council.

- **3-monthly inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts**
Cllr. McCash carried-out the three-month inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts and they were in good order.
- **CPRE membership renewal**
Parish Councillors agreed to renew the CPRE annual subscription of £36. **Action: J. Allsop**

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Additional non-agenda item**
 - **Cancellation of regular hirers session**
From time to time, regular hirers have cancelled a paid for session because either they were off sick, or no students attended. Cllr. Meischke said hirers have been allowed to put the unused session towards a future booking. However, there is no fixed policy on this issue. Although many of halls would insist on charging, he felt that as a good will gesture we should continue this practice. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.
- **Car Park bin**
Cllrs. Smith and Meischke forgot to ask the ramp installation contract to move the car park bin whilst they were working on site. They have therefore asked Mark Blacktin to do this work.
- **Seat moved**
The John Waring memorial seat has been re-sited further up the sportsfield as the family were not happy with the location.
- **New ramp**
The new ramp is now fully installed. Cllrs. Smith and Meischke fitted the hand railings and received lots of positive comments about the installations.
- **Hall heating**
Cllr. Meischke said he had a meeting with a heat pump installation company who informed him that the Community Hall building is not sufficiently insulated for either a ground or air source heat pump.
Cllr. Meischke said that he was advised to obtain an EPC (energy performance certificate) at an approximate cost of £305. This would highlight the primary areas the hall is losing energy and allow us to schedule improvements.
Parish Councillors agreed that Cllr. Meischke should obtain an EPC for the Community Hall. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Fire Safety check**
Herts Fire Protection carried out the annual inspection of the fire equipment on 1st July and replaced the CO₂ extinguisher in the kitchen as it was out of date.
- **Frank Coopers benches**
Shaun of Frank Cooper will instruct his workers to either strim or cut the grass under the sportsfield benches.
- **Goal posts**
Cllrs. Meischke and Smith dismantled the goal posts, however they were promptly reinstated. They have now dismantled them again and locked them up.
- **Goal mouths**
Frank Cooper and Son have not repaired the goal mouths yet because the ground is so dry. They have agreed to do this work in the next few days, although the weather forecast remains dry.
- **Safety surface fault**
The newly installed safety surface under the small swings is breaking up. Cllr. Meischke said he had phoned Wicksteed Leisure several times and they have now promised to complete the repairs in the week commencing 18th July.
- **Replacement tables**
Cllr. Block said that both he and the Clerk had looked at prices online and six adult height 1.8-meter tables, the same quality as the junior tables will be approximately £1,000.
Parish Councillors agreed to order the tables, which will be paid out of Community Hall reserves. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Caretaker**
No new applications have been received. The Trustees need to relook at this item.
Cllr. Meischke said that some of the jobs on the caretaker list could be carried out by Frank Cooper & Son.
Cllr. Smith said he would look at the caretaker job description. **Action: M. Smith**
- **Changes to board of Trustees**
Following our previous meeting on 14th June, Cllr. Stock spoke to the three other Trustees and Cllr. Smith to outline his thoughts and suggestions about changing the rules determining the composition of the Board of

Trustees. As a result, he prepared a formal proposal (see attached for the record) which was then agreed by the Trustees and subsequently, via e-mail, by every Parish Councillor. (See attached)

The proposal was formally approved at this evening's meeting and any changes needed to the Charity documentation will be made accordingly. Action: Trustees

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Tennis Court resurfacing**

Chris Rolph of Sports Courts has scheduled the tennis court resurfacing work in for August/early September.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

Cllr. Dinnin said she will be arranging a meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee to discuss a way forward re the uncultivated allotment plots. Action: C. Dinnin

Two loads of rubble have been dumped at the end of the allotments. This was witnessed by an allotment holder; however, they did not record the vehicles number plate.

It was agreed that following the election of the new Parish Council in May 2023, the Allotments will become the responsibility of the Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee instead of the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Mill site**

Cllr. Smith said that he attended a site meeting on 1 July at 1400, involving Sarah Perry (Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust), the Environment Agency and Ed, of Stonemill (the owners of the Mill site) and Cllrs. Dinnin, Meischke, Knight and Block to discuss in general plans for the Beane and the Mill race.

Sarah Perry said that the Mill Pond will have its own ecology survey done as it may contain lots of wildlife that would be destroyed if water was flowing freely through it.

All the funding for the original Lammas/River Beane/weir project has now gone and new funding will need to be found by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency

The option of a pedestrian bridge over the river was also discussed. Cllr. Smith said that when he resigns as a Parish Councillor, he would be happy to continue pursuing the pedestrian bridge option, improvements to the river Beane and Mill Lane football development.

Cllr. Smith said that the Parish Council will need to identify how the Groundwork Trust grant is being used for the Mill Lane football development.

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. Jancey completed the report on 7 July 2022. The Clerk to e-mail her report to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Memorial bench at the Great Innings/High Street roundabout**

Cllr. Dinnin said that this memorial bench belongs to Paddy McCullen. His son left Watton-at-Stone several years ago and now lives in Cambridge. She has been in contact with him, and he is happy for the bench to be relocated if required.

Cllr. Meischke suggested that instead of relocating the bench a shelter could be made to shield the bench from bird fouling excrement. He agreed to obtain a quotation. Action: J. Meischke

- vi) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

- viii) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Cllr. Meischke reported that the defibrillator was reported to have been removed from the cabinet during an emergency. He inspected the defibrillator and confirmed that it had been removed from its housing, however it had not been used and remains in full working order.

The Clerk has updated the status of our defibrillator as working on www.thecircuit.uk, which is the national defibrillator network website.

ix) **Website/Facebook**

None.

x) **Highway issues**

Refer to item 7 g, Specific items - High Street traffic issues.

xi) **Dog fouling reports**

Refer to item 5 a 1, Investigate further article re minimising dog fouling.

xi) **Police reports**

PCSO Sally Brooks is currently away on holiday and therefore there is no police report.

9. Correspondence received

None.

10. Village organisations

None.

11. Items for Parish News

None.

Meeting closed: 2106.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 13 September 2022.

Proposal to amend the rules determining the composition of the Community Hall Board of Trustees

Introduction

I am proposing a simple change, as outlined below, that I believe will be of benefit, make life a little easier and bring a degree of increased flexibility to the way in which the Board of Trustees and the Parish Council (PC) operate with regard to managing the Community Hall.

The proposal has been agreed by the other three Trustees and once approved by the PC can be moved forward as necessary re changing the formal charity-documentation.

Background

When the Board was first set-up it was agreed that it shall comprise a maximum of four trustees and that they must all be current serving members of the Watton-at-Stone PC. This remains the case today.

One of the primary reasons for this was to ensure that the building, which is owned by the PC, would not be managed by any 'special interest' group; which was seen as a potential threat at the time.

- That said, we do have a form of in-built safety-net in so much as, apart from the routine day-to-day management of the Community Hall, the Trustees cannot introduce any substantive changes or activities (e.g., improvement projects, changes to the hire charges and agreements, the type of hirings, etc.) without the approval of the PC. Such proposals are presented to the PC in the form of recommendations for approval/acceptance, as is the case with the other sub-committees within the PC.

Proposed Changes

The current composition of the Board depends on 40% of the serving Parish Councillors (PCs) being prepared and/or able (e.g., due to outside commitments/workload, etc.) to take on such an additional and significant task. So, with this in mind and in the light of experience, I propose that we make the following fundamental change:

- The Board shall comprise **a maximum of four Trustees** and these must all be serving members of the PC.

If this is not possible or advantageous for any reason, then the Board must always comprise **a minimum of three serving PCs, with the fourth seat being filled by a member of the public elected/co-opted by the PC** for a specific term (e.g., a period of one year and subject to re-election as appropriate).

This revision enables us to achieve an additional degree of flexibility and the opportunity to identify an individual who can bring particular/appropriate skill-sets to the table and be of benefit to us all, and without them having the burden of other PC tasks and responsibilities.

It also gives us the chance to appoint ex-PCs when it is felt that we can benefit from their knowledge, understanding and input.

Written by: Cllr. David Stock