

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 8 November 2022

Present:	Cllr. Emma Waltham (Chairperson)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon	Cllr. Ian Knight
	Cllr. David Stock	Cllr. Nicola White
	Clerk: Jane Allsop	
Public:	Michael Smith (left meeting 1930) Jane Dodson	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs. Helen McCash and Annabel Kirk.

2. Public participation

Cllr. Waltham welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

Michael Smith was invited to give his report.

- **Land between Watton House and the A602**

The Woodhall Estate would like to use some of the Land between Watton House and the A602, for a car park for 10 – 12 cars. This could be used by walkers visiting the village and relieve some of the parking problems in the centre of the village.

Derek Hill (Youth Football) has also approached the Woodhall Estate expressing an interest in using the land for a 4G or 5G all-weather football pitches with storage and parking facilities. He would ideally want both the all-weather pitches as well as grass pitches at the Mill Lane site, but given an option for just one, the all-weather pitches would be his priority.

Parish Councillors agreed the idea should be investigated further. Cllr. Waltham said she needs to arrange a meeting with the Woodhall Estate to discuss the options with them. This land has been scheduled to be designated as a protected area in the Neighbourhood Plan. Public consultation shows that villagers want more youth football pitches. Football facilities at this location would keep traffic and parked cars away from the centre of the village.

Cllr. Meischke said that the Green Dragon Archery Club have also applied to Woodhall estate for the use of this land.

- **Mill Lane bridge**

Michael Smith reported that he continues to pursue a pedestrian bridge over the River Beane in Mill Lane.

He is due to meet with residents of Willowdene re gaining a small amount of their land. Without it, the bridge project would not be possible.

Michael Smith left the meeting.

3. Chair's/Clerk's report

Cllr. Waltham welcomed recently elected Cllr. White to the meeting.

Cllr. Kirk will be attending her first meeting on 6 December.

The following items to be discussed during the meeting

- 6 a, Planning application - Broom Hall farm
- 6 b, Planning decisions – 14 High Street
- 7, Specific items – District Councillor Sophie Bell
- 9, Correspondence received
 - E-mail from Air Ambulance
 - E-mail from Ken Crofton

4. Declaration of interests

None.

5. Minutes of the last meeting.

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Extra ordinary Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 27 October 2022**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1. **Investigate having a shield made to go over the bench at the Great Innings/High Street roundabout**
This items to be deferred until March 2023. **Agenda: 03/2023**
2. **Investigate need for dog fouling signage for the village:** Outstanding. **Action: C. Dinnin**
3. **Ask Thames Water what the problem is with the Station Road sewer:** Outstanding. **Action: J. Allsop**
4. **Close CCLA coif deposit account**
The Clerk has obtained the CCLA form required for closing the account, which now needs to be completed and returned. **Action: J. Allsop**

c) Action points resolved

1. **Purchase 123 Sheets VAT software to submit Community Hall monthly returns**
The Clerk said she had made the purchase and submitted a VAT return using the software.
2. Instruct Frank Cooper & Son to mark up the football pitch
3. **Obtain quotation from Grassroots for relocation of 2 benches on sportsfield**
Cllr. Stock said that he had e-mailed a copy of the quote (£178.56 plus VAT) to all Parish Councillors on 23 October, and it was approved by all. He has arranged for the work to be done tomorrow (9 November) and, together with Cllr. Dinnin and Cllr. Knight, will meet Ben Storey there to agree the new positions for the two re-sited benches under the Oak Tree. The Parish Councillors endorsed this decision.
4. Tape-off the two benches on sportsfield to prevent use
5. Write Parish News article re the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan
6. Liaise with the Clerk re updating the NP section of the website
7. Obtain quote from Jacqueline Veater for remaining work to NP
8. Organise a meeting date for the High Street traffic working group
9. **Loan mobile flood lights to Ware Rotary**
Cllr. Meischke said the Ware Rotary Club thanked the Parish Council for the use of the mobile floodlights during their Firework event on 5 November. However, although they had been on charge the night before, three out of the six units did not work.
Cllr. Meischke to investigate the problem to see if the batteries or their charges are at fault. **Action: J. Meischke**
10. Display a notice of conclusion of audit on the Parish Council notice board
11. Submit budget items for 2023/2024 to Cllr. Block
12. Renew Trustees' indemnity insurance cover
13. Set up direct debit payment for Google Workspace
14. Pursue Wicksteed regarding equipment faults
15. Purchase 2.5 litre kettle
16. Ask Michael Smith where he previously obtained sleepers for the car park
17. Inform Tennis Club that they cannot store food in their tennis storage box
18. Relet vacant allotments
19. send reminder e-mails to allotment holders re hedge cutting work
20. Obtain quotations for tree inspection work
21. Give the Clerk details of the arboriculturist used by Datchworth Parish Council
22. Monitor depression forming in tarmac surface at the entrance of Rivershill
23. **Send donation to Citizens Advice East Herts**
Citizens Advice East Herts have e-mailed their letter of thanks.
24. Contact applicants who applied for co-option to the Parish Council
25. Arrange for Nicola White and Annabel Kirk to sign the declaration of acceptance of office

6. Planning**a) Applications**

All planning applications were e-mailed to Parish Councillors prior to the meeting as well as Cllr. McCash's report.

- i. **10 Watton House (3/22/2099/HH)**
Erection of front porch.
Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response. **Action: J. Allsop**
 - ii. **Lane Croft, Perrywood Lane (3/22/2224/HH)**
Single storey rear extension incorporating a partial basement area underneath. New ground floor side window and door.
Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response. **Action: J. Allsop**
- The following Application was received after the agenda was published.
- **Broomhall (3/22/2288/AGPN)**
Erection of agricultural building (grain store)
Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Decisions**i. 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 - EHDC permission granted

ii. 53 Great Innings (3/22/1827/HH)

Rear single storey extension

- EHDC permission granted

iii. 14 High Street (3/22/1741/ASDPN)

Additional storey on a dwelling house (to increase the height of the dwelling from 5.35 metres to 7.94 metres) and the demolition of the side rear extensions. New drop kerb to serve the existing driveway.

- EHDC permission granted

7. Specific items**• District Cllr. Sophie Bell**

Cllr. Waltham said that she had spoken with Cllr. Bell, who has agreed to attend the next meeting of the NP committee. She said that Cllr. Bell is currently living in Milton Keynes and has no form of transport to allow her to attend evening meetings in Watton-at-Stone. She will be stepping down as our District Councillor at the end of term, May 2023, but is willing to speak to us between meetings and attend Zoom meetings.

Cllr. Bell has succeeded in getting the traffic wardens to visit the village. She continues to help residents with their housing association problems. Currently residents who rent their properties through Clarion Housing are experiencing the worst problems.

a) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

Cllr. Waltham said the final phase of consultation on the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan began today with the start of EHDC's 6-week consultation on the NP, in accordance with Regulation 16. The consultation runs from 8 November to 20 December 2022.

Cllr. Waltham has been successful in persuading Locality UK to grant us an additional £2,500 of funding towards the NP and this should cover the remaining costs involved. Unfortunately, it comes too late to cover the cost of Govresources Limited (Jacqueline Veater) latest invoice, dated 30 September, for £510 ex VAT. The Parish Council has already paid and agreed to bear this cost.

The housing association developers for the Great Innings North site will continue to do scoping work.

A site meeting was held on 18 October between members of the NP committee, the Environment Agency, Fairview New Homes, Cllr. Meischke and Michael Smith at the location of the proposed bridge over the River Beane. The biggest hurdle with the NP is the Environment Agency, who are alarmed that we have now gone to Regulation 16 without their approval of changing the current 3b classification of the River Beane bridge at the location of the proposed pedestrian footbridge.

The NP have a meeting with Fairview New homes tomorrow (9 November).

The NP now need to get the Woodhall Estate on board with land for football facilities (refer also to item 2 Public participation - Land between Watton House and the A602). A meeting is also being arranged to discuss S106 following the new developments, with EHDC and HCC, to which County Cllr. Ken Crofton has been invited (currently it is unknown if he is available to attend).

b) High Street traffic issues

Cllr. White said that during a preliminary meeting of the High Street traffic working group, she was elected as Lead. The High Street remains dangerous to pedestrians, and to drivers with compromised visibility. Traffic flow remains restricted with frequent hold ups and congestion.

It was agreed that the best approach is to develop a data driven solution ourselves, whilst engaging with locals, before presenting our findings and our proposed solution directly to the Highways Authority.

Cllr. White was asked to produce a photo-board on PowerPoint of traffic problems in the High Street covering a one-week period. She will inform Parish Councillors when this week is due to take place, so that they can copy her in with any photographs they take during this period.

Action: Parish Councillors

c) Investigate dog fouling signage for the village

Refer to item 5 b 2, Review of actions - Investigate need for dog fouling signage for the village.

d) EHDC re litter picking and litterbins

It is unclear from correspondence received from EHDC and information on their website what the cost implications are to the changes being made to the litterbin collection and litterpicking work. The only thing that is clear is that we will no longer receive an annual grant for some of the work Rosemary Brown does around the Community Hall area.

Cllr. Block and the Clerk to investigate further so that a suitable budget figure can be agreed for 2023/2024.

Action: S. Block/J. Allsop

8. Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
I Allotment holder – rent 2022/2023	22.00	Amazon – 2 litter pickers
	22.00	20.79
		20.79
Payments		
Govresources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan - consultation work	612.00
M. J. Smith	Knudge Ltd (1st Call signs) allotment sign	30.00
Citizens Advice	Donation towards running costs	250.00
J. Allsop	October salary + £11 mobile phone	1,087.45
Google Cloud		9.20
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – October 2022	50.40
Frank Cooper & Son Ltd	Grass cut on 17/10/22	78.00
Perfect Ground Solutions	Cricket pitch maintenance	1,416.00
		3,533.05
Receipts		
Nationwide	Interest for period October 22	111.81
Santander	Interest on deposit account	0.82
15 Allotment holders	Rent and water charges for year 2022/2023	578.00
		690.63
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Table tennis	144.00	
Archery – Main Hall	140.00	
Floodlighting to 30.09.22 to 25.11.22	125.00	
	409.00	
Payments		
D P Electrics	replace electronic lock on outside toilets	135.00
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 10 of 10	73.00
British gas	Gas	18.45
Jane Allsop	123 Sheets Ltd – VAT return	23.40
Jane Allsop	Kettle	32.99
		282.84
Receipts		
Tanya Baser	2nd 50% deposit for hire -23 Oct Pav	20.00
Sue Burgess	Pavilion October	15.00
Tanya Baser	Main Hall - 23 October	48.00
Claire Lacey	Deposit for regular hiring in January 2023	50.00
HMRC	VAT rebate - September 2022	2,694.76
Sue Burgess	Pavilion -31 October (cancelled)	10.00
Santander	Bank interest	0.82
Mark Everid for Rachael	1st 50% deposit for hire - 4 Dec MH + Pav	38.00
Lisa Hayes	Main Hall	24.00
		2,900.58

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Request for Budget items for 2023/2024**

Cllr. Block reminded Parish Councillors to give the Clerk their budget items for 2023/24 as soon as possible.

Action: Parish Councillors

- **Date for Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting**

This meeting to be arranged before the December Parish Council meeting.

Action: S. Block/J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Changes to the Trustee Charity documentation**

Cllr. Meischke said that Alister Liddiard (Longmores) confirmed, on 4 November by e-mail, that the Trustees can alter clause F of the Trustees Deed. Parish Councillors at their meeting held in July 2022, formally approved the changes needed to the Charity documentation.

The Trustees held a special meeting on Monday 7 November in which they made a resolution to change clause F of the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Charity Deed as follows.

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).

Cllr. Meischke and the Clerk to make amendments on the Charity Commission website.

Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop

- **Annual play area safety inspection**

Cllr. Meischke was disappointed to report that Wicksteed Leisure have not fixed the faults identified in the annual playground inspection to the pieces of equipment they fitted earlier this year. Cllr. Meischke will continue to chase them to do out the work required.

Action: J. Meischke

Other faults reported in the inspection refer to missing items on the Kompan equipment. Cllr. Meischke asked Parish Councillors if they wanted him to ask Kompan to quote for the missing items.

Jane Dodson said that Datchworth Parish Council use a small company called CPM Playgrounds Ltd (based in Letchworth) who seem to have every size of bolts and caps required. She agreed to e-mail the Clerk their contact details.

Action: J. Dodson

Cllr. Meischke to contact CPM Playgrounds in the first instance, to see if they are able to supply the missing items.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Swing fault**

See item above.

- **Changing room extractor fan**

One of the extractor fans in the changing rooms had a fault, which left it running all the time. D. P. Electrics have replaced the faulty fan and found that it and one other fan are running off the same single sensor. They will also be replacing the fan in the other changing room and fitting an additional sensor.

- **Paperwork updates**

The following paperwork has been updated and copies have been placed on the website, where applicable, and on the Community Hall internal notice board.

- Fire-Safety Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety policy
- Insurance certificate
- List of Parish Councillors

- **Outside toilets**

More vandalism has occurred to the outside toilets. A door was ripped off and Mark Blacktin did an emergency call out to do the repairs.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight had nothing to report.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

Cllr. Dinnin said that most of the allotment rents have been paid. There are 6 vacant plots. Posters advertising the vacant plots have been placed on the notice boards as well as on Facebook and the news page of the website.

- **Hedge cutting**

Stanley Agricultural have done an excellent job of cutting back the Sportsfield and allotment hedges.

- **Seat opposite doctors**

The shrubbery around the High Street seat opposite Watton Place Clinic needs attention.

It was agreed to ask Adam Welch, who is responsible for this area, to inspect and quote for any extra work that is required.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Trees safety checks**

Nick Fox has given Cllr. Meischke the contact details for the tree surgeons that the Woodhall Estate use.

Jane Dodson has given the Clerk the contact details for Gristwood & Toms, who Datchworth Parish Council use for their tree management.

Cllr. Dinnin to arrange a meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee to discuss tree safety checks.

Action: C. Dinnin

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

Refer to item 9 a Community Hall Trustees - Gas meter.

iii) Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests

Done.

iv) Monthly village-report

Cllr. Hammon completed the report on 7 November 2022 and the Clerk e-mailed all Parish Councillors a copy the results.

Cllr. Hammon's main comments were:

- Main pitch freshly cut but looking a bit churned up.
- Football pitch is very muddy around the small goal posts at the tennis court end (there is a little goal offset from the goal area for the actual pitch).
- The cricket nets are getting very overgrown at the edges – small bushes growing. It needs strimming right back.

The Cricket Club, who are responsible for this to be notified accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- There are some very big thistles and some rubber matting with grass growing through where the bike ramps used to be on the meadow. Should we clear the patch and grass it over?

Cllrs. Meischke, Stock and Dinnin to inspect

Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock/C. Dinnin

- The High Elms Lane salt bin is very overgrown, about $\frac{3}{4}$ full, part flooded with lots of snails! Should we clear it or remove it?

After discussion it was agreed to leave this salt bin on the monthly-village report

- Shrubs around the War Memorial are looking very smart except the azalea (?) tree behind the bench which has died. New pebble finish is getting some green patches – is that moss?

Further to Cllr. Hammons comments about the War Memorial, Cllr. Stock said that he will discuss the issues during his meeting with Ben Storey (Grassroots) on 9 November.

Action: D. Stock

• Allotment water

The allotment water supply needs turning off for winter and a meter reading taken. Cllrs. Meischke and Block agreed to do this and to take a meter reading at the same time.

Action: J. Meischke/S. Block

v) Weekly sportsfield-report

Nothing to report.

vi) 6- Month report

Cllrs. Meischke and Stock agreed to do the report before the December Parish Council meeting.

Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock

vii) Weekly defibrillator inspection

Nothing to report.

viii) Website/Facebook

- Website & Facebook: Welcome to new Parish Councillors
- Facebook: Neighbourhood plan - final consultation

Action: J. Allsop

ix) Highway issues

Nothing to report.

x) Dog fouling reports

Nothing to report.

xi) Police reports

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed PCSO Sally Brook's police report of 7 November.

9. Correspondence received

- **Air ambulance**

Essex and Herts Air Ambulance e-mailed (on 24 October) requesting a donation towards their running costs. Parish Councillors agreed that it was not their policy to give donations to charities, however individual Parish Councillors were open to do so if they so wish.

In the case of the Citizens Advice East Herts, their cause directly benefits individuals within the village during these financially challenging times, which is why the Parish Council approved a donation.

- **E-mail from Ken Crofton - update on footpath 21 surface improvements**

County councillor Ken Crofton e-mailed on 14 October informing us that works to footpath 21 will be in two stages. The first stage will be to cut back the vegetation to allow vehicles to access the site. This will need to be done this Autumn/winter to allow ground works to begin from spring onward. The estimated start date will be from April 2023.

10. Village organisations

None.

11. Items for Parish News

The following items were identified for inclusion in the December/January issue of the Parish News.

- Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan update
- Co-option of two new Watton-at-Stone Parish Councillors

Action: J. Allsop

Meeting closed: 2036.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 6 December 2022.