

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 10 January 2023

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Emma Waltham (Chairperson)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon	Cllr. Annabel Kirk
	Cllr. Helen McCash	Cllr. David Stock
	Cllr. Nicola White	Clerk: Jane Allsop

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Ian Knight.

### 2. Public participation

None.

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

Cllr. Waltham said there were two extra items.

- River Beane restoration work in Watton-at-Stone – refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.
- Car pollution outside the Watton-at-Stone school – refer to item after 9 b, Correspondence received.

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting.

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 6 December 2022**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Obtain dog fouling signs from District Councillor Sophie Bell**  
The Clerk has e-mailed customer services at East Herts asking for 20 dog fouling stickers, as she did not receive a response to her text message from District Councillor Bell
2. **Send completed closure forms to CCLA re coif deposit account**  
The funds from the CLLA coif deposit account were transferred into the Community Hall's current account on 9 January. Formal notice of account closure has not yet been received.
3. **Chase Castle Water for a response about missing water meter**  
Castle water have acknowledged receipt of our letter re missing meter. The Clerk to chase for a full response. **Action: J. Allsop**
4. **Set up drop box and upload all relevant Parish Council documentation**  
Cllr. Waltham has set up a Dropbox, which all Parish Councillors now have access to and can share documents with each other. The Clerk has uploaded a folder named PC toolkit which contains various protocols and guidance rules etc.
5. **Play equipment repairs**  
Cllr. Meischke is chasing Wicksteed Leisure for the parts required to rectify the swing problems, as well as items for the teen shelter. **Action: J. Meischke**
6. **Arrange to have car park signs made**  
Michael Smith has been actioned to arrange for the car park signs to be made. **Action: M. Smith**
7. **Ask Adam Welch to provide quotation for tree inspection**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Tree safety checks.
8. **Inspect condition of post where litterbin used to be on sportsfield**  
Cllr. Meischke and Michael Smith to remove the post when the weather improves. **Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith**
9. **Arrange for the leaves around the tennis court to be cleared**  
The Clerk has e-mailed Frank Cooper & Son requesting that they clear the leaves around the tennis courts.

#### c) Action points resolved

1. E-mail all members of the High Street Working Group re meeting on 4 January
2. Send out e-mail disclaimer to all Parish Councillors together with other relevant documentation & protocol
3. Sign Budget and Finance Sub-Committee minutes
4. E-mail contractors accepting quotations for work in 2023
5. Notify Football Club of charges for season 2022/23
6. Reimburse Allotment & Garden Association for the cost of their public liability insurance cover
7. Renew SLCC membership
8. E-mail all Parish Councillors a copy of the 6-month report
9. E-mail PCSO Sally Brooks asking her to provide a police report and e-mail to all Parish Councillors

## 6. Planning

### a) Applications

None.

### b) Decisions

#### i. 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 -EHDC- permission refused

The following Application was received after the agenda was published.

- **10 Watton House (3/22/2099/HH)**

Erection of front porch. -EHDC- permission granted

## 7. Specific items

### a) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

Cllr. Waltham reported that the Regulation 16 consultation finished on 16<sup>th</sup> December. Jacqueline Veater has looked at the comments made and there is nothing alarming or surprising. A couple of organisations have made comments that are quite useful, but it would have been helpful if they had made them earlier in the consultation process.

There was concern that the Environment Agency might object to the plans for a pedestrian bridge over the River Beane from the Fairview New Homes site. However, they have not objected, only stated their concerns, which are hopefully in the process of being resolved. Fairview New Homes have been late in presenting the information required but hope to submit their model to the Environment Agency by 26 January, who in turn, have promised to look at it within a 4-week period.

The NP do not make comments on regulation 16 responses, this is left up to the planning inspector.

The next stage will be for the NP to be submitted to the planning inspector. EHDC will give Jacqueline Veater a list of inspectors to choose from. As our NP is a new type of plan, enabling us to release Green Belt, a legally biased planner will probably be the best option rather than one more focused on planning.

Provided there are not any hold ups at the planning inspector stage, there should be a referendum during the summer of 2023, with adoption in the Autumn.

Cllrs. Waltham and Hammon did not attend the last NP meeting with Derek Hill (Youth Football) and therefore were unable to give any updates.

Cllr. Waltham has a NP action to arrange a meeting with HCC and EHDC so they can help the NP with the benefits. **Action: E. Waltham**

Locality UK have not yet paid the £2,500 NP grant, which will be used to pay Jacqueline Veater's fees.

### b) High Street traffic issues

Following a meeting of the High Street working group on 4<sup>th</sup> January, Cllr. White produced summary notes from their meeting and these were e-mailed to Parish Councillors. **See attached**

Cllr. White went through the salient points for the benefit of those who were not at the meeting.

Parish Councillors discussed the various issues and the rationale for progressing the option of passing bays/passing places.

The Working Group team plan to walk the High Street on Friday 13 January, to map potential sites for parking restrictions to aid flow of traffic and safety to pedestrians and drivers.

### c) 390 Bus service

Cllrs. Waltham and Kirk had lots of feedback from their 390-bus survey with comments from parents in Watton-at-Stone as well as other areas along the 390 route. Complaints about the lack of service, children having to stand and often the lack of room for them to get on the bus.

Cllr. Waltham said she had spoken to Dan Tancock (Team Leader for Network & Infrastructure at HCC transport section), who informed her that Aviva would be given up the 390 bus route in the middle of January because of a lack of drivers. HCC will ensure that a double decker bus is used by the new provider of the 390 service.

She has asked Dan Tancock if they can have another conversation about the school bus service. If it is possible to access another funding stream, then ideally a separate service from Watton-at-Stone to Ware, avoiding Hertford and going via Tonwell could be set up. This include a pick up from Datchworth, who currently have no service. Cllr. Waltham also needs to find out the legal requirement of HCC to provide a school bus service for the children in this county. **Action: E. Waltham**

#### d) Civic meeting dates in 2023/24

It was agreed that the April 2023 Parish Council meeting be moved forward by one week from 11<sup>th</sup> April to 18<sup>th</sup> April. This is because the original date is the day after Easter Monday and several Parish Councillors will be away due to the school holidays.

It was agreed that the Parish Council meetings in the Civic year 2023/24 shall be held on the second Tuesday in the month, except for the May 2023 meeting which will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday.

• Tuesday 16 May 2023	• Tuesday 14 November 2023
• Tuesday 13 June 2023	• Tuesday 12 December 2023
• Tuesday 11 July 2023	• Tuesday 9 January 2024
• No meeting in August 2023	• Tuesday 13 February 2024
• Tuesday 12 September 2023	• Tuesday 12 March 2024
• Tuesday 10 October 2023	• Tuesday 9 April 2024

The Parish Council meeting in May 2023, will be preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

#### e) Village directory

This item to be deferred until the month after the new Parish Council is elected in May 2023. **Agenda: 06/2023**

## 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		Morrissey cheque for cash to Church	15.00
			<b>15.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>			
GoogleCloud	Google workspace - direct debit		9.20
Steven Hankin	Return of allotment deposit		50.00
J. Allsop	December salary, +£11 mobile phone=£1540.86		1,087.98
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – October 2022		50.40
Frank Cooper & Son Ltd	Grass cut on 17/10/22		78.00
Rosemary Brown	32 hours litterpick @ £10.50 per hour		336.00
HMRC	Tax & NI - July - October - December 2022		487.86
Allotment & Garden Assoc	Public liability insurance		132.20
Frank Cooper & Son Ltd	pitch marking		42.00
J. Allsop	back pay to April 2022		452.88
ICO	Annual subscription		35.00
Bidwell	Allotment rent - 6 months		381.34
Rosemary Brown	paid 32 hours litterpick @ £10.50 per hour but timesheet for 18 hours		336.00
Community Hall	Annual grant		7,015.00
Community Hall	NHB towards tennis court resurfacing Overpaid by £4,000		11,200.00
SLCC	Annual subscription		177.00
			<b>21,870.86</b>
<b>Receipts</b>			
1 Allotment holders	Deposits, Rent and water charges for year 2022/2023		72.00
Ware Rotary	Donation re use of mobile floodlights		50.00
M. Morrissey	Cheque for cash to Watton church – refer to Helen McCash		15.00
Nationwide	Interest for period		101.28
Santander	Interest on deposit account		1.93
			<b>240.21</b>
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Tony Silverstri - Pavilion	15.00		
Table tennis -Main Hall	64.00		
Archery – Main Hall	74.00		
Floodlighting to 21.11.22 – 22.12.22	69.00		
	222.00		
<b>Payments</b>			
British gas	Electricity to 26 November 2022		246.69
Rosemary Brown	28 hrs clean @£10.50 per hr		294.00
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 9 of 10		73.00
Castle Water	Water charges		378.70
HCC	Cleaning materials		31.01
Rosemary Brown	21.5 hrs clean @£10.50 per hr		225.75
British gas	Electricity to 26 December 2022		202.22
			<b>1451.37</b>

Receipts		
HMRC	Vat REBATE – October 2022	224.18
Casual Hirer	2nd 50% for hire - 10th Dec MH + Pav	38.00
Bounce	Main Hall hire - November 2022	223.25
Tennis Club	Use of the Community Hall facilities	419.00
Casual Hirer	2nd 50% for hire - 30th December - Pav	22.50
Outdoor Fitness class	Dec use of toilets and changing rooms +MH	84.00
Santander	Interest on deposit account	1.93
Casual Hirer	Deposit (less than 1/2) 11th Feb MH & Pav	22.50
Casual Hirer	2nd 50% for hire - 7 Jan 23 MH + Pav	60.50
Community Hall	Parish Council annual grant	7,015.00
Community Hall	NHB for tennis court resurfacing - overpaid by £4,000 to be reimbursed	11,200.00
COIF Deposit	Deposit account closure	2,241.99
Spanish Lessons	Meeting room - Jan - March	144.40
Bounce	Main Hall hire - December 2022	123.50
		<b>21,820.75</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Approval and signing of Precept forms for 2023/24**

At its December 2022 meeting, the Parish Council agreed the provisional precept requirement for 2023/2024 of £42,545.

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 6<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Cllr. Waltham asked Cllr. Block if he was concerned that the Parish Council might have to eat into the NHB funds before the end of the financial year. He said that this was unlikely to happen and hoped that the following year, which has several unknowns, would also not eat into the NHB funds.

The Parish Council continues to hold a healthy bank balance of £84000 although this does include the Groundwork Trust Grant.

The Community Hall also holds a healthy balance of £26,000. Revenue from Hall and Pavilion hirings is running slightly below forecast but this is compensated by lower cleaning costs. It is expected that energy costs will come in at or slightly below budget for the full year.

Cllr. Meischke questioned why the Jubilee celebrations were not taken out of NHB. The Clerk said that it had not been minuted that the Parish Council had agreed to do this.

Parish Councillors formally agreed that the cost of the Queen's 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee celebrations be taken from the NHB funds. The Clerk to amend the 9-month accounts accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **9-monthly inspection of accounts**

Cllr. McCash conducted the 9-month inspection of the accounts on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023, and they were in good order.

## Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Report and minutes of the Trustees meeting held on 4 January 2023**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed with a draft version of the Community Hall Trustees minutes prior to this meeting.

- **Report on items resolved since the Trustees meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021** -Extracts from Parish Council minutes are attached to the Community Hall Trustees minutes.
- **Report on Special Trustees meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 re Amendment to the Trustees Charity Deed** - Refer to December 2022 Parish Council minutes, item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
- **Resignation and appointment of new Trustee** - Refer to December 2022 Parish Council minutes, item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
- **Community Hall keys** - As a Trustee, Michael Smith holds a master set of keys to the Community Hall. Cllr. Meischke holds a master set and hirers set of keys. The Clerk has been asked to get the Ladies Football set of keys back from Steve Betts.
- **2022 Annual playground inspection** - To resolve items highlighted in the inspection, Cllr. Meischke is chasing Wicksteed Leisure for the parts required to rectify the swing problems, as well as items for the teen shelter.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Michael Smith met with a representative from the contact that Jane Dodson had supplied, CPM Playgrounds Ltd. They inspected the sportsfield play equipment items and will provide a report on any items that need addressing and the cost of the remedies. However, to date this report has not been received. Michael Smith to chase.

**Action: M. Smith**

- **Monthly village- report and 6- month report**
  - **Non authorized usage**  
Further to the report at the December Parish Council meeting, the Trustees have now agreed the wording for the car park notices and Michael Smith will arrange for three large signs to be made.  
**Action: M. Smith**
  - **Sleepers** Cllr. Meischke to obtain replacement sleepers for the car park.  
**Action: J. Meischke**
- **Unused area of safety surface by the play area**  
The Trustees to look at the unused safety surface area to ensure that it is made safe and tidy.  
**Action: Trustees**
- **Cricket nets:** to be included on the monthly village report.  
Michael Smith to contact Ryan Ansell (Cricket Club) re weed killing at the bottom of the nets to prevent grass and weeds growing.  
**Action: J. Allsop**  
**Action: M. Smith**
- **External doors:** to be inspected in April/May this year.  
**Agenda: 04/2023**
- **External toilets:** Another incident of vandalism occurred just before Christmas resulting in the toilets remaining closed over the holiday period. The damage included broken bottles, food all over the place as well as faecal matter. The soap dispenser had been jammed down one of the toilets.  
The vandals are either putting something in the door to prevent the door from closing and the electronic lock for locking or they are getting into the toilets by using force on the door which forces the magnetic lock to open.  
The vandalism seems to occur on the evenings when a car is parked in the Community Hall that appears to be selling drugs. Cllr. Meischke said that he had tried to speak to PCSO Sally Brooks about this but had been unable to get hold of her.  
The Trustees discussed the problem and agreed that we should go back to the old system of locking and unlocking the toilets. Rosemary should be instructed to unlock the toilets each morning and lock them again around 1600.  
Cllr. Meischke said he had now cleared out the toilets and Rosemary is unlocking and locking them daily.  
An apology about the closure of the outside toilets due to vandalism has been uploaded to Facebook and the Parish Council website.
- **Mobile floodlights:** refer to December 2022 Parish Council minutes, item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
- **Energy usage:** the gas usage has not been invoiced since October as British Gas Lite are waiting to find out how much help we will get from the government. Once an invoice has been issued, the Trustees can decide if a fuel levy needs to be added to hirings.
- **Annual boiler servicing and electrical inspection:** Cllr. Meischke to contact James Turner Limited and D. P. Electrics.  
**Action: J. Meischke**
- **Warm Place event:** Due to the wet weather, nobody attended the first warm place event. Cllr. Meischke hopes to run this as a once-a-week event running from 10:00 until 15:00 from next week onwards, 17 January. The Trustees have altered the current hire agreement to allow multiple people attending the event to sign the document. The library will be opening the hall with Cllr. Block lock up the building when he is at the hall running the Table tennis session.
- **Football pitch:** The Trustees will meet with Derek Hill on the morning of Thursday 12 January to discuss the option of the Youth Football using the sportsfield.  
**Action: Trustees**
- **Annual Charity Return for the year ended 31 March 2022:** The Clerk to submit the return before the deadline date of 31 January 2023.  
**Action: J. Allsop**
- **Rosemary Brown – Hall hire**  
Cllr. Meischke said that Rosemary Brown will be hiring the meeting room for 1.5 hours each week starting on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January. Parish Councillors agreed, that because she always goes above and beyond with her duties for both the Parish Council and Community Hall, she will not be charged for this hiring.

### Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Nothing to report.

### Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**  
Four of the allotment plots remain unlet, but the allotment area is looking mainly tidy considering the time of year. mainly
- **Tree safety checks**  
Cllrs. Dinnin said that owing to the Christmas period she had been unable to arrange a meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee to discuss tree-management and the meeting with Tony Bradford about tree-safety checks. Cllr. Stock and the Clerk then summarised the discussions had with Tony Bradford.

Adam Welch has confirmed, via e-mail, his verbal quotation of £300 to survey the trees for which the Parish Council is responsible: namely on the Lammas, Watton Green, the Cottage Site, the Meadow (sportsfield), allotments and land at Walkern Road (beside Beane Cottage). Parish Councillors agreed to accept Adam's quotation. The Clerk to e-mail Adam accordingly and ask him to contact Cllr. Dinnin before he does the inspection so that a Parish Councillor(s) can accompany him. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Rivershill Green**

It has long been believed that the land known as Rivershill Green was owned by the Parish Council. This is a tree-covered area on the left-hand side of the Watton Road heading towards Datchworth. There is also a right-of-way footpath through this land. On reading some documentation on file, the Clerk was in doubt about the ownership of the land and obtained permission from several Parish Councillors to do a Land Registry search. The Land Registry confirmed that Rivershill Green is owned by the Woodhall Estate. She has submitted a second application to see who owns the trees adjacent to this land. i.e., that run directly along Watton Road to Datchworth (as the map in the Parish Council files includes this area). She is still awaiting a response from the Land Registry.

- **River Beane restoration work in Watton-at-Stone**

Affinity Water, under license by the Environment Agency, is planning to carry out restoration work on the River Beane starting on 16<sup>th</sup> January.

The objectives are to:

- improve fish passage – Brown Trout – Grayling
- geomorphological processes – clear gravel bed, pools, riffles and silting
- localised bank repairs - this will include installation of wire mesh cages filled with large stones (gabion baskets)
- scope any additional benefits both upstream and downstream.

Affinity Water need to gain access to part of the Lammas via Mill Lane. This was agreed by Parish Councillors. Cllr. Waltham (as chairperson) signed the Affinity Water access agreement.

The Clerk to e-mail a scanned copy of the signed agreement to Alexandra Sage (Water Resources and Environment, Affinity Water).

**Action: J. Allsop**

Cllr. Block agreed to draft an article about the work Affinity Water will be doing so it can be uploaded to Facebook, our website and submitted to the Parish News.

**Action: S. Block**

- **Mr. and Mrs. McPherson**

Cllr. Waltham said that Mr and Mrs McPherson have provided their proposals for planting on the Lammas bank opposite their property. It was agreed to write to inform them that due to circumstances beyond our control, the Parish Council will not be in a position to look at their proposals until after the Affinity Water restoration work has been completed. The McPhersons' to be asked to remove the red plastic-fencing their Contractors left on Lammas side of the riverbank before Affinity Water start work on 16 January.

**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 monthly. 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**

Although smart meters are fitted, Cllr. Meischke continues to give the Clerk gas and electricity meter readings at the end of each month. The Clerk uploads the readings to the providers websites.

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

Done.

- iv) **Monthly village-report**

Cllr. Block completed the report on 6 January 2023 with Cllr. White in attendance. All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the report.

- **Broken chair** - by litterbin near Community Hall
- **Community Hall** - some debris on the roof and the external doors need painting
- **Car park** - sleepers need replacing
- **Cricket nets:** gaps and holes in the nets and some weeds underneath them.
- **Recycling clothes bin**— some rubbish next to it. This is Woodhall Estate land.
- **Salt bins** – all need filling as they are either empty or nearly empty.
- **War Memorial** – a few small weeds
- **Pump slope:** The footpaths leading from Hockerill to the High Street (pump slope) are very slippery due to wet leaves

The Clerk to request that Highways fill the salt bins as soon as possible.

**Action: J. Allsop**

The Clerk to ask EHDC to clear the leaves on the pump slope.

**Action: J. Allsop**

The following items need adding to the Monthly village-report.

- See-saw
- Cricket nets

**Action: J. Allsop**

Cllr. White thanked Cllr. Block for his patience taking her around the village. She said he had produced a route map for her as a guide to completing the monthly village-report. She is in the process of adding this to a digital map and agreed to upload it to our new Dropbox for all to view.

**Action: N. White**

v) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

vi) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Nothing to report.

vii) **Website/Facebook**

Upload Cllr. Block's article re Anglia Water's proposed work to the River to the website and Facebook page.

**Action: J. Allsop**

viii) **Highway issues**

Cllr. Waltham and Kirk said that the pothole outside 6 Rivershill has significantly increased in size.

**Note:** The Clerk contacted Michael Smith for a picture of the pothole, and he informed her that a temporary repair had already been carried out.

ix) **Dog fouling reports**

Nothing to report.

x) **Police reports**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of PCSO Sally Brook's police reported dated 9 January.

## 9. Correspondence received

a) **EHDC – Proposed polling scheme to apply from May 2023**

The proposed new Watton-at-Stone Ward includes the existing ward of Watton-at-Stone plus parts of the existing ward of Hertford Rural North (Bramfield and Stapleford Parishes).

b) **Mr. and Mrs McPherson**

Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee – final bullet point.

- **Car pollution outside the Watton-at-Stone school**

Cllr. Kirk reported that there are a couple of parents who park their cars outside the school reception area and keep their diesel engines running. Although parents have been asked not to do this, via the weekly newsletter, it has not deterred these drivers. The fumes are particularly unhealthy for small children who are closer to the diesel exhaust points.

After Parish Council discussion, Cllr. Kirk agreed to talk to the school about this issue and suggest that cones could be put out during school drop off times to discourage drivers from going down this narrow section of road.

**Action: A. Kirk**

The police could also be asked to visit the school during the morning drop off times, so that they can speak to the parents involved.

PCSO Sally Brooks to be asked if a police representative would meet with Parish Councillors to discuss local policing issues.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## 10. Village organisations

None.

## 11. Items for Parish News

Items for inclusion in the February 2023 issue of the Parish News to be identified at the January 2023 Parish Council meeting

- Anglia Water's proposed work to the River Beane.

**Action: S. Block/J. Allsop**

**Meeting closed: 2113.**

**The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 14 February 2023.**