

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 14 February 2023

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Emma Waltham (Chairperson)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Christine Dinnin	Cllr. Ian Knight
	Cllr. David Stock	Cllr. Nicola White
	Clerk: Jane Allsop	
<b>Police:</b>	PCSO Leon De Bruyn (from 1935 to 1953)	

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs. Stephen Block, Catherine Hammon, Annabel Kirk and Helen McCash.

### 2. Public participation

None.

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

Cllr. Waltham said there were two extra items.

- **Report on meeting with Waste and Recycling team on 1 February re litterbin and dog waste bins**  
Cllr. Block to report on this item at the March Parish Council meeting under Specific items. **Agenda: 03/2023**  
**Action: S. Block**
- **Report on meeting with PCSO Sally Brooks on 10 February**  
Refer to item directly after 7 a, Specific item – Neighbourhood plan.

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting.

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 10 January 2023**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Chase Castle Water for a response about missing water meter:** Outstanding. **Action: J. Allsop**
2. **Chase Wicksteed Leisure for the parts required to rectify the swing problems**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
3. **Arrange for the car park signs to be made**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
4. **Remove litterbin post on the sportsfield when the weather improves:** Outstanding. **Action: J. Meischke**
5. **Arrange meeting with HCC and EHDC re NP benefits**  
Refer to item 7 a, Specific items - Neighbourhood plan.
6. **Find out the legal requirement of HCC to provide a school bus service**  
Refer to item 7 c, Specific items - 390 bus service.
7. **Chase CPM Playgrounds Ltd. re playground report**  
Cllr. Meischke received the following e-mail (dated 19 January) from Billy of CPM Playgrounds.  
Please find requested quotes below.  
Add soil, turf and grass mats to remove trip hazard in front of the seat under the tree. £280.00 plus vat  
Remove and dispose old metal bin post behind the teenage shelter £20.00 plus vat  
Supply and install new wooden post on the sit up station £260.00 plus vat  
Cut out a 100 mm strip around the wet pour edge where it has shrunk, and refill with bonded black wet pour. 42 metres in total £1680.00 plus vat  
Kompan unit replace 4 x missing bolts and caps, to fill the holes £20.00 plus vat  
Replace missing bungs and caps on teenage shelter £20.00 plus vat  
It was agreed to respond stating that the Parish Council will be addressing the current problems themselves. However, going forward CPM Playgrounds will be contacted about any problems or missing parts that arise on the play area. **Action: J. Meischke**
8. **Obtain replacement sleepers for the car park:** Outstanding.
9. **Inspect the unused safety surface area to ensure that it is safe and tidy:** Outstanding
10. **Contact Ryan Ansell re weeds under the cricket nets**  
The Clerk to find out if Michael Smith has completed this action **Action: J. Allsop**
11. **Produce & upload to Drobox a digital map of best route re month village-report:** Outstanding  
**Action: N. White**

## c) Action points resolved

1. Return completed precept form to East Herts Council
2. Modify 9-month accounts re NHB expenditure
3. Contact James Turner Limited and D. P. Electrics re annual safety checks
4. Meet with Derek Hill from Youth Football
5. Submit the Annual Charity return
6. Accept Adam Welch's e-mail quotation re tree inspection & report
7. E-mail scanned copy of the signed agreement to Affinity Water
8. Draft an article about the work Affinity Water is doing along the river Beane
9. Submit article re Affinity water to Parish News and upload to website and Facebook
10. Write to Mr and Mrs McPherson re Affinity water
11. Request Highways fill the salt bins as soon as possible
12. Ask EHDC to clear the leaves on the pump slope
13. Include see-saw and cricket nets on monthly village-report
14. Contact school re issues concerning cars parked at school drop off times
15. Contact PCSO Sally Brooks to arrange a meeting to discuss policing issues in the village

## 6. Planning

### a) Applications

#### i. 62 Hazeldell (3/23/0093/HH)

Proposed single storey front extension, replacement roof for existing single storey element and alterations to fenestration

This is the second application for the proposed extension (the previous application having been refused) and, after discussion, it was felt that it was out of keeping with the surrounding area and existing front-extensions and would have a negative impact on the street scene. It could also result in setting a precedent for the future.

It was therefore agreed to write to the planning department stating that the Parish Council is concerned that the application is out of keeping with existing front-extensions and about the negative effect on the street scene.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### b) Decisions

None.

## 7. Specific items

### a) Neighbourhood plan

Cllr. Waltham said that Fairview New Homes have submitted their model for the bridge over the River Beane to the Environment Agency. However, due to flooding problems in other areas of the country, the Environment Agency have not had time to look at the model. Hopefully when they do, it will be to declassify this section of the River Beane to enable plans for a footbridge to go ahead.

Mehron Kirk and Derek Hill have met with the Woodhall estate to discuss the option of 4G all-weather pitches. Cllr. Waltham said she did not have an update on this meeting; however, she hoped that if the Woodhall estate are happy to go forward with plans, and we could be in a position to submit a planning application on the site soon. Some of the Groundwork grant funding is being used to produce an outline design for both the Mill Lane and the Ware Road (HCC compound) sites, including illustrative views for both sites, plan layout showing the proposed pitches, associated car parking, access footpaths, storage areas, planting, etc and all put together in a summary brochure. This sort of project would be best run directly by the Woodhall estate, however they would not have access to large amounts of funding, unlike the Youth Football who would.

Cllr. Waltham discussed with Laura Guys (EHDC) the benefits included in the NP. We are now getting to the stage where we are giving up control of the NP and have done all we can concerning the benefits for the village, with the exception of the school footpath link between Gatekeeper and footpath 17. This area is locked during out of school hours and weekends. Agreement needs to be obtained to move the boundary fencing to this footpath, which would allow it to remain permanently open and also enable the school to lock their boundary during out of hours times.

When the NP has been adopted, the Parish Council will need to develop a masterplan to take the benefits forward. There is not an established process for this, but the Parish Council should get access to funding from S106. Cllr. Waltham said that, if re-elected in May, she is happy to take the lead as a member of the Parish Council. The Parish Council will need to set aside some funding to pay for Jacqueline Veater to help us with this process.

Laura Guy has sent details of three inspectors, who have put their name forward to inspect the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan. These are Christopher Lockhart-Mummery, Andrew Ashcroft and Edward Cousins.

Jacqueline Veater's preferred option would be Christopher Lockhart-Mummery because of his legal expertise.

After discussion, Parish Council agreed to opt for Christopher Lockhart-Mummery.

Cllr. Waltham to notify Laura Guys accordingly and speak to her about the school footpath link.

**Action: E. Waltham**

Cllr. Knight asked when Fairview New Homes are likely to be submitting a planning application for the Walkern Road site. Cllr. Waltham said that they have been told they cannot apply until after the NP referendum, because the land is currently in the Green Belt. The Parish Council will need to apply to release this land from Green Belt first and will not have the authority to do so until the NP has been ratified.

## Police

### • Report by PCSO De Bruyn

Cllr. Waltham welcomed PCSO Leon De Bruyn to the meeting and invited him to give his police report (PCSO Sally Brooks and PC Rob Wenham were unable to attend as they are off sick).

He has been appointed as the PCSO Supervisor covering an area of 184 miles and with only 6 PCSOs. He is attempting to attend as many Parish Council meetings as possible in his area of responsibility.

Although his report did raise some discussions, the main points he raised included the following.

- His report did give rise to some discussions There have been 4 crimes since the police-report in January and comprised the theft of number plates (in different locations), theft of a wheel clamp, damage to a communal area and one assault.
- The theft of number plates and catalytic converters is currently on the rise in Hertfordshire so any incidents should be reported to the police by calling 101.
- Drugs has not been a problem identified in this area, although there are local suspicions that dealing takes place around the Community Hall.
- We were asked to ensure that any acts of vandalism or suspected drug use is reported as soon as it happens. Recent incidents of vandalism in the outside toilets at the Community Hall were not reported and PCSO De Bruyn said it was important to report all incidents, however small, because they cannot react to crimes they don't know about, and patterns cannot be identified. If for any reason a crime cannot be reported via telephone, the online crime submission form can be used. This can then be backed-up by e-mailing either PCSO Sally Brooks or PC Rob Wenham.
- Our six PCSO's do a lot of work in schools, of which there are 36 in our area.
- We were asked to supply the Police with the dates of any public events, such as Fetes and Fun Days, that are planned to be held in the village so that they are aware and could attend if appropriate.
- The police are keen to recruit more people onto their Owl messaging scheme. PCSO De Bruyn was asked to provide some text to advertise the scheme on our Facebook page, website and notice boards.

PCSO De Bruyn left the meeting at 1953.

### • Meeting with the Police on 9 February

Cllr. Stock summarised the outcome of the recent meeting with two members of the Police, namely Sally Brooks and her Sergeant, to discuss local issues and Police involvement.

In addition to himself, Cllrs. Meischke, White and Kirk attended on behalf of the Parish Council.

He said that due to the greater time available, the meeting proved to be worthwhile for both sides and a better understanding of issues such as the problems associated with communications, reporting and response times, etc., was achieved. It also gave us a better opportunity to discuss local and general issues of concern in greater detail with the Police and without the time restraints imposed during our monthly Parish Council meetings.

Councillors then went on to discuss the specific issues raised, including those summarised in the notes taken at the time by Cllr. Kirk. The follow-up actions to be taken remain subject to further discussion and agreement.

Although we do get police reports at our monthly meetings, either in person or by e-mail (depending on the shift-pattern of the Police representative involved; usually Sally Brooks), it was agreed that we should consider having further routine face-to-face meetings on an annual basis and at a time that would fit with the shift-patterns of the day. The Clerk to diary-date a meeting in for one year's time and to be agreed with the Police nearer that time.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### b) High Street traffic issues

Cllr. White said that there was nothing to report.

### c) 390 Bus service

Cllr. Waltham was pleased to report that there appears to be a positive outcome to the secondary school survey that she and Cllr. Kirk carried out re the 390-bus service from Watton-at-Stone to Ware, via Hertford. She has been in contact with Dan Tancock (Network and Infrastructure Team Leader, Integrated Transport Unit at HCC re the problems and informed her that Aviva will be giving up the 390 service within the next few weeks, with another provider taking on the contract and ensuring suitably sized buses are used (double decker if required).

However, he also informed her that HCC are planning to put on an extra bus from the end of March, which will stop in Watton-at-Stone at 0755 and go straight to Ware, with a journey time of approximately 20 minutes. There will be two return buses in the afternoon at around 1600 and 1630 to bring children back to Watton-at-Stone. This service is usually routed along the Watton-at-Stone bypass as it journeys between Stevenage and Ware but will be diverted into Watton-at-Stone for the school runs.

The tender for the new service is being awarded this week and Dan Tancock is feeling very positive about it actually going ahead. The Parish Council will need to publish the new service when they know the start date and bus times. The service will be open for anyone to use, not just school children. **Action: E. Waltham/J. Allsop**

Cllr. Waltham said that some Presdales school girls, who currently use the 390 service, are catching the earlier bus at around 0700 to ensure that they get to school on time, and it is not acceptable that they need to do this.

The new bus service will also mean that there will be less overcrowding on the 390 bus.

#### d) King Charles III coronation celebrations

Parish Councillors agreed that due to the Parish Council elections in May, it would not be appropriate for them to organise any coronation celebrations as councillors organising the event may no longer be in office. However, they would welcome any individuals who are considering getting together to organise a larger-scale celebration/event (such as the Parish Council did for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee last year), to get in touch.

Cllr. Stock agreed to write an insert for the Parish News, which the Clerk will also upload to the Parish Council website and Facebook. **Action: D. Stock/J. Allsop**

## 8. Reports

### a) Sub-Committees

#### Budget & Finance

In the absence of Cllr. Block, Cllr. White reported on the following item.

- Monthly accounts

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash – Payments	
Denise Hodgson – Allotment rent and	72.00	Fasthost – watton-pc.org.uk domain	14.39
	72.00		14.39
Payments			
Wages and Salaries	January 2023		1327.10
J. Allsop	BT phone charges - to Dec 2022 and to Jan 2023 (2 months)		45.96
GoogleCloud	Google workspace - direct debit		9.20
			1382.26
Receipts			
Community Hall	Refund NB fund re Tennis court - budgeted reserves		4,000.00
Groundwork Trust	Grant for NP		1,785.00
Nationwide	Interest		97.90
Santander (deposit a/c)	Interest on deposit account		10.86
			5,893.76
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion	75.00		
Art Class – meeting room	48.00		
Table tennis -Main Hall	188.00		
Archery – Main Hall	132.00		
Floodlighting 22.12.22 to 09.02.23	212.00		
	655.00		
Payments			
HMRC	VAT return - November 2022		149.74
Parish Council	NHB- repayment for tennis court resurfacing, funding from reserves		4,000.00
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 10 of 10		73.00
British gas	Gas		740.36
Wages	January 2023		283.50
James Turner	Repair to toilets and attend toilet leak in hallway		128.32
British gas	Electricity		222.84
HMRC	VAT return - December 2022		206.57
			5,804.33
Receipts			
Vicki Stanley	1st 50% deposit for hire - 4 Mar MH + Pav		33.25
Tracy Jenkins	Pavilion on 5.02.23		31.50
Imagination Dance	Pavilion & Main Hall hire - Jan - March 2023		207.00
Epping Forest Band	Paid in full - 19 Mar MH		24.00
Emily Ambrose	Paid in full - 4 Mar MH + Pav		57.00
Benjamin Maxwell	(Fabiana Mezzaroba) Yoga classes in March 2023		62.50
Sashia Lennon	Final payment less deposit for 11th Feb MH & Pav		53.50
Watton House	Meeting room		12.00
C. Millar - Yarn	Meeting room		14.00
			494.75

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Annual review of documents**

The annual review of the following document to be discussed at the March 2023 meeting. **Agenda: 03/2023**

- Financial Regulations
- Risk Assessment and Financial Management
- Review Asset registers
- Long term capital expenditures

The Clerk to e-mail copies of the above documents to all Parish Councillors.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

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

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the Trustees minutes.

Cllrs. Meischke and Stock approved the minutes, which were then signed by Cllr. Meischke.

- **Annual inspections**

- **Electric tests**

D. P Electrics carried out the annual emergency lighting and PAT testing checks at the Community Hall as well as PAT testing the Parish Council's equipment at the Clerk's home.

- **Boiler inspection**

James Turner Limited has completed the annual boiler and heating inspections.

- **Football**

Youth Football will be using the sportsfield and Community Hall's pavilion, kitchen and toilet facilities for a match on Sunday 19 February. If the venue proves successful, it will hopefully lead to a regular booking next season (autumn 2023). Hiring costs to be negotiated.

- **Car Park Signs**

Two new signs have been installed. One on the wall above the toilets and the other on the car park lighting column.

The old white car park sign has been removed.

- **Play equipment - Wicksteed**

Wicksteed Leisure have at last sent the parts required to rectify the swing problems, as well as items for the teen shelter. Cllr. Meischke and Mr. Smith to fit these items.

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

- **New hirings**

The Community Hall have two new regular bookings starting soon. One is due to start in March and the other in April.

- **Warm space**

Cllr. Meischke said that due to a lack of interest, only 2 people turned up over three weeks and therefore he has had to shut the warm space down.

## Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Tennis court – matters**

One of the floodlighting bulbs has failed. This will not be replaced until at least one other bulb fails, due to the high installation costs.

The Tennis Club would like to have permission to provide a portable screen to be fitted between the courts to prevent tennis balls going onto the wrong court. This would be stored in the lockable cabinet, which is currently on order. Parish Councillors agreed.

- **Junior football goal**

Cllr. Knight asked if the junior football goal could be moved because footballs going onto the court can be hazardous. It was agreed that the football posts can be moved because they are also causing wear to the grass. Cllr. Meischke said that in its current location it had helped move casual football up the field and away from the Community Hall. He agreed to arrange for the goal to be relocated.

**Action: J. Meischke**

## Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **The Lammas**

Cllr. Block e-mailed all Parish Councillors on 10 February as follows.

‘The restoration works on The Lammas have been finished for the time being.

Some berms and deflectors have been installed which should reinforce the riverbank and improve the flow.

The work on the gabion baskets has been delayed and utilities under the road bridge has meant that work there has been ruled out.’

Cllr. Dinnin said that because of the utilities under the bridge, the planned fish passages cannot be installed.

Affinity Water did not realise there were utilities under the bridge but perhaps they should have done more research on this project, especially as they spent a great deal of money on equipment and hiring land.

The work Affinity Water have done along the Lammas stretch of the river looks very good, although a bit harsh at the moment. Cllr. Dinnin said that once greenery grows up in spring this should all mellow.

- **Tree safety checks**

Cllrs. Dinnin and Stock met with Adam Welch, during which he decided that he did not want to be involved in carrying out any further tree-inspection work for the Parish Council.

Cllr. Stock said he is in the process of writing a draft tree-safety policy document.

**Action: D. Stock**

Once this has been completed and agreed, we can consider how to implement the policy, e.g., training for two Parish Councillors to enable them to do the primary inspections or identify someone else willing to do so.

- **Allotments**

Cllr. Dinnin said that she had let one more allotment plot, leaving three vacant.

## 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. Waltham completed the report on 6 January 2023. All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the report.

- **Sportsfield** - There was a small amount of litter near the tennis court benches but the rest of the area is looking good.
- **Allotments** - good given the time of year.
- **Mill Lane site** - pretty much finished.
- **War memorial garden** - someone has deposited a potted plant. It was agreed to leave for the time being to see if it gets removed.
- **Great Innings Notice board** - is an eyesore. The Clerk said that this is the responsibility of the housing associations. It was agreed to wait until after the Parish and District Council elections and ask our new District Councillor to address the situation. **Agenda: 06/2023**  
It was agreed to look at the condition of the Parish Council notice board at the High Street / Great Innings junction. This is rarely used and gets covered in bird excrement. Cllr. Meischke agreed to look at this whilst inspecting the adjacent bench. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **River Beane bridge at Walkern Road** - the gabion baskets on the riverbank, at the bottom of the garden at 1 Lammas Road, are falling apart due to heavy rain and increased river flow. These were due to be replaced at the same time the restoration works on The Lammas were being done, but this work has now been delayed.
- **Drains** - many of the drains across the village have an unpleasant smell.

- v) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

**vi) Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Nothing to report.

**vii) Website/Facebook**

Articles on the Coronation celebrations and bus service update.

**Action: D. Stock/ E. Waltham**

**viii) Highway issues**

The raised surface of the mini roundabout near the War Memorial is braking up and needs reporting to

Highways faults.

Cllr. Waltham agreed to take photographs of the roundabout. The Clerk to upload the photos to HCC website when submitting the fault.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**ix) Dog fouling reports**

Nothing to report.

**x) Police reports**

Refer to item directly after 7 a, Specific item – Neighbourhood plan.

## 9. Correspondence received

**a) Police & Crime Commissioner – update on speed sign funding request**

The Clerk asked Michael Smith to find out what had happened to the speed sign application he submitted two years ago. The following response was received on 6 February from Stephanie Evans (Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire).

“Thank you for your e-mail and I’m sorry you’ve had such a long wait to hear from us.

At this time we have no further information to share but I can assure you that we have it before us and the wider Road Safety Partnership and we will get back to you as soon as possible.”

This items to be put on the July agenda.

**Agenda: 07/2023**

## 10. Village organisations

**• Watton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Cllr. Stock attended a recent meeting of the War Memorial Management Committee and said that things were in good order, although there had been a problem and some concerns re unauthorised parking due to a car being left in their car park. This resolved itself.

## 11. Items for Parish News

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

- Coronation celebrations
- Bus service update.
- Owl messaging service

**Action: E. Waltham/D. Stock/J. Allsop**

**Meeting closed: 2125.**

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