

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

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Emma Waltham (Chairperson)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon (after 1937)	Cllr. Ian Knight
	Cllr. Annabel Kirk	Clerk: Jane Allsop
	Jane Dodson	

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs. Helen McCash and Nicola White.

Cllr. Waltham opened the meeting by voicing her sadness at the resignation of David Stock after almost 32 years as a Parish Councillor. She expressed her thanks to David for all the work he has done in the community during his years of public service. All Parish Councillors present agreed that he will be sorely missed by us all.

### 2. Public participation

Jane Dodson said that she has been officially confirmed as the Conservative District Councillor candidate for the Watton-at-Stone ward, which now covers, Watton-at-Stone, Whempstead, Bramfield, Stapleford and part of Waterford.

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

Cllr. Waltham said there is one extra items.

- Planning application – 5 Lammas Road. Refer to item 6 a, Planning applications.

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting.

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 14 February 2023**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Remove litterbin post on the sportsfield when the weather improves:** outstanding.  
Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith
2. **Publish the new bus service when start date and bus times are known**  
Refer to item 7 c, Specific items - 390 bus service. Action: E. Waltham
3. **Inspect notice board at Great Innings/High Street junction & adjacent seat re making a protective cover:** outstanding. Action: J. Meischke

#### c) Action points resolved

1. **Chase Castle Water for a response about missing water meter**  
Cllr. Block was pleased to report that a water meter has now been fitted on the allotment supply, following a call the Clerk made to Castle Water, who had failed to respond to written requests.  
Castle Water have also refunded the invoices charged during the period there was no water meter in place. A new invoice has been provided based on a volumetric adjustment supplied by Affinity Water for the period of 362 days with no water meter.
2. Contact CPM Playgrounds Ltd. re playground report
3. Write to planning department re 62 Hazeldell (3/23/0093/HH)
4. **Contact Laura Guy re Neighbourhood Plan inspectors and school footpath link**  
Refer to item 7 a, Specific items - Neighbourhood plan.
5. Diary-date a meeting with the Police for one years' time
6. Write an insert for the Parish News re king Charles III celebrations
7. E-mail Parish Councillors documents that require annual review
8. **Fit parts supplied by Wicksteed Leisure** – refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees. Action: J. Meischke
9. **Relocate junior football goal** – outstanding, waiting for drying weather. Action: J. Meischke
10. **Write draft tree-safety policy**  
Cllr. Dinnin said that now that Cllr. Stock has resigned from the Parish Council, the Environment Sub-Committee will need to take this item forward. It was agreed that this item be placed on the May 2023 Parish Council agenda under Specific items. Agenda: 05.2023
11. Submit articles for inclusion in the March issue of the Parish News

## 6. Planning

### a) Applications

#### i. 5 Lammas Road (3/23/0370/HH)

Two storey rear and single storey front extension

The rear application is similar in design to extensions already completed on the three properties to the left of 5 Lammas Road. A small front extension and garage conversion has also been included in the application.

Cllr. Dinnin said she visited the neighbours, neither would be objecting to the plans.

Parish Councillors agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

### b) Decisions

None.

## 7. Specific items

### a) Neighbourhood plan

Cllr Hammon arrived at the meeting.

Cllr. Waltham said that she has spoken to Laura Guy about the school footpath link, who agreed to find a contact at EHDC to help us with the Children's Centre footpath link.

Cllr. Waltham has agreed to our planning consultant's advice that the NP is not submitted to our chosen inspector until the Environment Agency issue regarding the proposed footbridge has been resolved. Hopefully, this delay won't mean we need to choose another inspector.

Fairview New Homes want to submit a pre-planning application before the NP has been ratified.

The Woodhall Estate has been supportive regarding providing 3G sports pitches. The NP committee would like to prepare a planning application for the 3G pitches before the Groundwork Trust grant for Youth Football has to be returned on the 31 March. The suggestion is that a Agripower, who did the survey and topography work on the Mill Lane site, complete similar works at the Woodhall site. In addition, Marine Goudoffre does some revision to the design and illustration work she has already done. These works would be submitted with a planning application to EHDC. Mehron Kirk is the lead on the 3G working group, which also includes Charles Clark and Derek Hill (Youth Football).

Cllr. Meischke expressed concern that the Parish Council could land up having to foot the bill for invoices that come in after 31 March due to the short timescale. Cllr. Waltham said that Mehron Kirk was confident that he could get the work completed in the timescale. Parish Councillors agreed that NP can proceed but all expenditures must be approved by the Parish Council first via e-mail.

### b) High Street traffic issues

Cllr. White has uploaded her draft High Street traffic issues report into the Parish Council Dropbox for councillors to review, comment on and add to.

It was agreed that the High Street Working Group meet again soon to discuss engaging with the local shops and public houses. The Clerk to notify Cllr. White.

Action: J. Allsop

### c) 390 Bus service

Cllr. Waltham said that Centra Bus have taken over from Aviva in running the 390 service. They are using bigger buses and making better-timed journeys. Even when they are late in arriving in the village, they make up for lost time on the journey. There was an initial hick-up with the ticket system, which did not allow weekly child fares but Centra Busses have now resolved this problem.

HCC have managed to secure funding for the extra bus service to Ware, which will now commence in the Spring and not at the end of March. This will stop in Watton-at-Stone once in the morning and twice in the afternoon, allowing children to get to and from school using the service. Cllr. Waltham said that she has agreed not to advertise the new bus service until the timetable has been approved.

### d) King Charles III coronation celebrations

Although advertised on our website, Facebook page and notice boards, nobody has been in touch about any larger-scale celebration for the King Charles III's coronation.

### e) Report on meeting with Waste and Recycling team on 1 February re litterbin and dog waste bins

Cllr. Block reported that on 1 February, he, Cllrs. Meischke, Dinnin, Kirk, Stock and the Clerk, had a meeting with 3 members of the Waste and Recycling team from North Herts Council and Jon Hart from East Herts Council. Going forward the two councils plan to work more closely together in emptying the litter and dog waste bins. In the meantime, there will be no change to the service that the Village receives. There was some discrepancy on how many litter bins are emptied but hopefully this will soon be clarified.'

The Clerk to chase North Herts Council for the litterbin map. EHDC have already provided the dog waste bin map.

Action J. Allsop

## 8. Reports

### a) Sub-Committees

#### Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block reported on the following item.

- **Monthly accounts**

<b>Watton-at-Stone Parish Council</b>			
<b>Petty Cash –</b>		<b>Petty cash – Payments</b>	
Denise Hodgson – Allotment rent and	72.00	Timpson – keys for Lammas and	
	<b>72.00</b>	Watton Green	27.00
<b>Payments</b>			<b>27.00</b>
Marine Goudoffre	Design and illustration work (paid from grant for Youth Football)		1,200.00
Wages and salaries	February 2023		1474.30
GoogleCloud	Google workspace - direct debit		9.20
			<b>2,683.50</b>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Nationwide	Interest		91.79
Santander (deposit a/c)	Interest on deposit account		13.85
			<b>105.64</b>
<b>Watton-at-Stone Community Hall</b>			
<b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>		<b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>	
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion	45.00		
Archery – Main Hall	90.00		
Table tennis -Main Hall	196.00		
Floodlighting 09.02.23 to 13.03.23	139.00		
	<b>470.00</b>		
<b>Payments</b>			
D P Electrics	PAT Testing Community Hall		45.00
D P Electrics	Annual Emergency lighting tests and PAT office equip at Clerk		57.00
HCC	Cleaning materials		76.56
British gas	Gas		413.20
Wages	February 2023		283.50
1st Call signs	2 car park signs		78.00
James Turner	Annual service of two ideal vogue boilers		238.80
HMRC	VAT return - January 2023		101.08
British gas	Electricity		256.80
HCC	Cleaning materials		55.49
			<b>1605.43</b>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Talbot Fitness	January use of toilets & changing rooms + Main Hall		96.00
M. Chapman	1st 50% deposit for hire – 30 Mar Pavilion		15.00
Linda Evans	1st 50% deposit for hire – 8 April - Pavilion		18.00
Peter Khera	Main Hall hire - January - March		247.00
Janine Gildersleve	Main Hall hire - December 2022		161.50
M. Chapman	meeting room on 09.03.23		14.00
Santander (deposit a/c)	Interest on deposit account		7.38
Vicki Stanley	2nd 50% payment for hire - 4 Mar Main Hall + Pavilion		33.25
Rachel Lawrence	1st 50% deposit for hire - May 13 Main Hall + Pavilion		33.25
Mentor Services	Meeting room		14.00
Paula Sutton	Main Hall		179.55
			<b>818.93</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Annual review of documents**

- **Financial Regulations**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of the 'Financial regulations' document, dated February 2022, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2023 and uploaded to the website. Action: J. Allsop

- **Risk Assessment and Financial Management**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of the 'Risk Assessment and Financial Management' document dated February 2022, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2023 and uploaded to the website. Action: J. Allsop

- **Review Asset registers**

Cllr. Block said that he and Cllr. Meischke had reviewed the asset register to make some small amendments

- 37 litterbins reduced from 40.
- 3 Portable rechargeable floodlights (including batteries) instead of 6, as three of the batteries have died.

All Parish Councillors to be e-mailed the revised asset register.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Long term capital expenditures**

Cllrs. Block and Meischke have made some changes to the long-term capital expenditure items to reflect work that has been done over the past year. Namely: purchase of 6 tables and resurfacing of double tennis courts have been removed. Additional item added is the resurfacing of the single tennis courts in the 10-year column.

All Parish Councillors to be e-mailed the revised Long-term capital expenditures.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Appoint auditor for the Internal audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023**

Parish Councillors agreed that Stuart McCash is appointed as the internal auditor of the Parish Council accounts.

The Clerk to arrange for the Parish Council accounts, for the year ending 31 March 2023, to be submitted to Stuart McCash for auditing.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Appoint auditor for the External audit of the Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023**

Parish Councillors agreed that McCash and Hay are appointed as the external auditor of the Community Hall accounts.

The Clerk will arrange for the Community Hall accounts, for the year ending 31 March 2023, to be submitted to McCash and Hay for auditing.

Action: J. Allsop

## Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Electric tests & replacement emergency lights**

D. P Electrics has completed the remedial works identified during the annual electrical inspection and fitted replacement parts.

- **Car Park Signs**

The new car park signs have been installed.

- **Play equipment Wicksteed**

The Wicksteed Leisure parts to rectify the swing problems, as well as items for the teen shelter will be installed when the weather improves.

Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith

- **Crack in wall up by entrance**

This item was deferred from the October 2022 meeting. It was agreed to place this on the agenda for the September Parish Council meeting.

Agenda: 09/2023

- **Pavilion Windows & Doors**

The side windows in the Pavilion and the main entrance doors and windows will need replacing soon.

This item to be placed on the agenda for the next Trustees meeting.

Agenda: Trustees

## 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 she had a request from an allotment holder to turn the water supply on. She told them that the water cannot be turned on yet because temperatures are still sufficiently low that, if the standpipes are full of water, they could freeze causing a water burst.

The allotments look in reasonably good condition for the time of year. However, there are still three vacant plots.

- **Sportsfield grass cutting quotation**

On 23 February, Frank Cooper and Son Limited e-mailed to notify the Parish Council that they would be ceasing business on 31 March, leaving the Parish Council in urgent need of finding a grass cutting and maintenance contractor for the 2023 season.

Cllr. Dinnin said that Michael Smith, had on instruction of the Parish Council, contacted several grass contractors, two of which did not respond (Perfect Ground Solutions and Stuart Kirkham).

Stanley Agricultural have declined to quote.

NCD Ground Maintenance Services Limited submitted the following quotation dated 10 March.

The prices are net of VAT and show the price increase compared to Frank Cooper's 2023 quotation.

- Perimeter of Sports-field around the Tennis Courts, Bike Ramps and Seats and mow between Tennis Courts and hedge.
- Perimeter of the Tennis Courts, clear out stone drain remove weeds, leaves and rubbish. Clear out any leaves and weed from inside of the Tennis Courts.
- Three times a year or when necessary or requested **Per Visit £130**  
(£20 increase on Frank Cooper price per visit)
- Cut the grass where the gang mowers cannot go from the gate, around the Community Hall to School Lane. Every other week unless not required or when necessary or asked **Per Visit £40**  
(£4 increase on Frank Cooper price per visit)
- Weed around the play area/safety surface and weeding around the Community Hall footpaths.
- Twice a year when necessary or asked **Per Visit £45**  
(£5 increase on Frank Cooper price per visit)
- Pruning the Community Hall Garden, by front entrance doors
- Twice a year in May and November or when necessary or asked **Per Visit £40**  
(£4 increase on Frank Cooper price per visit)
- To gang-mow sportsfield **Per cut £100**  
(£30 increase on Frank Cooper price per visit)

Based on 20 grass cuts a year, plus the maintenance works, the additional cost is in the region of £720.

Due to the Cricket season looming in April and the need for the grass to be cut at least twice prior to the first fixture, it was agreed to accept NCD Ground Maintenance Services quotation. **Action: J. Allsop**

For the 2024 season, the Parish Council will obtain three quotations.

- **Wooden benches – refurbishment**

This item was deferred from the December 2022 Parish Council meeting.

All the wooden benches need rubbing down and wood treatment applied. It was agreed to ask Mark Blacktin to quote for doing the work when the weather has improved. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **War Memorial Garden**

Cllr. Dinnin said that the War Memorial Garden has always been managed by former Cllr. David Stock. She said she had spoken to Ben Storey of Grassroots, who does the War memorial garden maintenance and he agreed that he will continue to do the work and will contact either herself or the Clerk if there are any problems. It is too early in the season to tell if any of the shrubs have died during the cold winter spells.

- **Church Lane**

There is a branch overhanging the carriage way from the Church graveyard side. Cllr. Knight agreed to inspect and take action as required. **Action: I. Knight**

- **Footpath behind George and Dragon**

A tree branch coming from Mr. Brett's boundary hedge (1 old School Orchard) has fallen over the footpath. Michael Smith has informed Mr. Brett's cleaner about the branch. Cllr. Dinnin to inspect to ensure that the branch gets cleared. **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 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. Dinnin completed the report on 11 March 2023 with Cllr. Kirk in attendance. All Parish Councillors to be e-mailed a copy of the report.

Action: J. Allsop

**• Sportsfield**

- **Litter bin** – bin frame next to teen shelter is a hazard. Cllr. Meischke and Mr. Smith to inspect.

Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith

- **Litter** -quite a lot of litter, especially near the Oak tree bench by the tennis courts.
- **Fence** – wooden fence along horses' field needs repairing and has some dangerous nails sticking out.

Cllr. Meischke and Mr. Smith to inspect.

Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith

- **Holm Oak tree** – stake to tree tie needs loosening.

Action: J. Meischke/M. Smith

- **Holly hedge at the top of School Lane** – needs cutting back and a bedhead removed  
The Clerk to write to the owners of the holly hedge asking them to cut back their hedge.

Action: J. Allsop

Cllr. Kirk agreed to take a photograph of the bedhead so the Clerk can send this to EHDC requesting fly-tipping removal.

Action: A. Kirk/J. Allsop

**v) Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

**vi) Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Nothing to report.

**vii) Website/Facebook**

It was agreed that if a member of the public comment on a village Facebook page and the Parish Council can help in anyway, an appropriate response should be made.

**viii) Highway issues**

Highways have carried out repair work to the mini roundabout near the War Memorial.

**ix) Dog fouling reports**

Nothing to report.

**x) Police reports**

PCSO Leon De Bruyn e-mailed (on 2 March) the February 2023 crime report covering our area.

This report has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors.

## 9. Correspondence received

**a) East Herts Council – Parish and District Council elections - timetable and procedures**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the May election timetable and procedures.

Under instruction from EHDC, notices advertising the election will be placed on the Parish Council noticeboard, the website and Facebook pages on 22 March 2023.

Action: J. Allsop

**b) Letter of resignation from Cllr. David Stock**

Cllr. David Stock wrote on 5 March submitting his letter of resignation.

The following notice has been placed on the Parish Council website and Facebook page

“After almost 32 years of service as a Parish Councillor, David Stock has resigned from the Parish Council and will not be seeking re-election in May this year.

I know that Parish Councillors past and present would join in saying a huge thank you to David on behalf of the community for all his years of public service. He has been a very hard working and committed councillor and will be very much missed.

Thank you David.

Emma Waltham, Chairperson, Watton at Stone PC”

**c) Frank Cooper and son – re sportsfield maintenance**

Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Sportsfield grass cutting quotes.

## 10. Village organisations

None.

## 11. Items for Parish News

One item was identified for inclusion in the April 2023 issue of the Parish News.

- Resignation of Cllr. David Stock.

Action: J. Allsop

Meeting closed: 2030.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 18 April 2023.