

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 12 September 2023

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Emma Waltham (Chair)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr. Nicola White (Vice-Chair)	Cllr. Clive Bell (after 19:24)
	Cllr. Michael Brooks	Cllrs. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Annabel Kirk	Cllr. Richard Lewis
	Cllr. Mark Richardson	Clerk: Jane Allsop
<b>Police:</b>	PCSO Sally Brooks and PC Ryan Willis (until 19:22)	
<b>Members of public:</b>	Darren Appleby (after 19:20)	

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Catherine Hammon.

### 2. Public participation

Cllr. Waltham welcomed the police to the meeting

PCSO Sally Brooks introduced PC Ryan Willis to Parish Councillors. He is a new member of the Rural East Herts Policing team and moved over from the Stevenage team. She said he is very initiative-taking and already a great asset.

Cllr. Kirk said that she will be arranging a meeting with PCSO Brooks, the Headteacher of Watton School and Cllr. Crofton to form a plan to make the roads around the school a safer area for children and their parents/carers.

**Action: A. Kirk**

PC Ryan Willis has already made himself present outside the school during morning drop of times.

PCSO Sally Brooks and PC Ryan Willis left the meeting.

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

Cllr. Waltham said that as the Parish Council currently has very full agendas, she and Cllrs. Meischke and White met to discuss how they could reduce the load on meetings. It was agreed that the best way forward is for Parish Councillors to e-mail their reports to all Parish Councillors in advance of the meeting. This is the way the Parish Council worked during Covid restrictions.

Cllr. Waltham asked committee chair and Parish Councillors to submit their reports the week before a Parish Council meeting, whenever possible.

### 4. Declaration of interests

None.

### 5. Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 11 July 2023**  
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

#### b) Review of actions

1. **Arrange a meeting to discuss parking issues outside the school in Rectory Lane:** outstanding.  
**Action: A. Kirk**
2. **Obtain quotations for replacing the main entrance door & Pavilion & meeting room windows**  
Cllr. Meischke said that he is meeting with a window and door contractor next week. **Action: J. Meischke**
3. **Apply mastic around the edges of the safety-surface near the Palace Fortress play equipment**  
Cllr. Meischke said that mastic will not be suitable to repair the edges of the safety-surface. He agreed to obtain a quotation from Mark Blacktin to repair the edges with the proper safety surface repair kit.  
**Action: J. Meischke**
4. **Monitor condition of footpath outside Newmans Court and near the ornate village sign to see if it is cleaned** outstanding.  
**Action: A. Kirk**
5. **Contact Dan Tancock (HCC) to ask if the 907 service can be extended**  
Cllr. Waltham said she had been in contact with Dan Tancock at HCC who said he is concerned that extending the 907 service for Watton-at-Stone would reduce the viability of the 390 service. Cllr. Waltham will arrange a follow-up call with Mr. Tancock to discuss this matter in more detail. **Action: E. Waltham**
6. **Chase Scout & Guide Group re awarding of the Parish Council's 'Outstanding Effort Award' trophy:** outstanding.  
**Action: J. Allsop**
7. **Write Parish news insert** outstanding.  
**Action: J. Allsop**

### c) Action points resolved

1. Arrange for Cllrs. Lewis and Richardson to sign the declaration of acceptance of office
2. Ask Sam Pearman (Watkins Hall Farm) if he would trim the verges around the memorial seat near his farm
3. E-mail Cllr. Crofton the map of wildflower alternative grass verge area
4. Chase HCC concerning the re-routing of the fencing up by the school
5. Ask Jacqueline Veater to invoice the Parish Council
6. Write to Sir Oliver Heald about the lack of Neighbourhood funding
7. E-mail Parish Councillors the link to the Local *Cycling* and *Walking* Infrastructure *Plans*
8. Write to EHDC re planning application for 17 High Street (3/23/1215/HH)
9. Write to EHDC re planning application for 33 Rivershill (3/23/1216/HH)
10. FAX Santander change of bank signatories
11. Renew CPRE membership
12. Obtain the RBRA bank account details so the Clerk can send donation
13. Instruct Mark Blacktin to repaint the exterior doors on the car park side of the Community Hall.
14. Ask Mehron Kirk to speak to Derek Hill re sportsfield usage
15. Contact Cllr. Meischke re interest in becoming a Community Hall Trustee
16. Speak to Chair of the Allotment and Garden Association re suggestions for keeping costs down
17. Contact the Diocesan Board re use of unused part of the allotments as an orchard
18. Purchase new net for Junior goal
19. Contact Air Ambulance asking them to empty recycling clothes bin
20. Purchase dog waste bags for dispenser
21. Upload article re Co-option of two new Parish Councillors to Facebook page and website
22. **Present Parish Council's Good Citizenship Award Trophy at the leavers service on Friday 21 July**  
Cllr. White said that it was a real privilege to award the Parish Council trophy at the leavers service in the Parish Church.

## 6. Specific items

### a) Neighbourhood plan

Cllrs. Waltham and Bell provided the following reports.

- **Referendum**

Our consultant Jacqueline Veater made some final updates to the Plan following the Inspector's Report. These mainly comprised removal of some of the Local Green Space designations, as the Inspector felt several sites did not adequately meet the criteria.

Following approval of the finalised Neighbourhood Plan by the Parish Council in August, the referendum has been arranged for 12 October.

EHDC ratified the decision to go to referendum on 6 September 2023 following the end of the consultation (call-in) period.

The Parish Council will need to do some publicity to prepare the residents for the referendum.

If the referendum result is Yes, then the Plan will be ratified by EHDC in December.

- **Sir Oliver Heald**

Following Cllr. Waltham's letter to Sir Oliver Heald regarding the freezing of the grant scheme, the scheme reopened, and the Parish Council secured a grant of £1020 which will be used to pay Jacqueline Veater for making the final amendments to the plan.

Cllr. Waltham will ask the grant body if the Parish Council can apply for funding to engage our consultant to assist in the master plan processes, as and when required.

- **Master Planning**

The NP Steering Group has engaged with EHDC in a master planning process for the Walkern Road site. The process comprises two meetings and a Hertfordshire Design Review Panel meeting. The first meeting took place in WAS on 4 September, and this will be followed by the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel and the final meeting during the first half of October. The Design Review Panel date is to be confirmed. The masterplan requires approval by EHDC Executive on 28 November 2023 to avoid the process over running to January 2024. Therefore, the masterplan requires to be finalized and submitted w/c 30 October 2023. The main points raised by the NP Steering Group was the need to consider the impact of the development on the village as a whole and to ask for assistance from EHDC in ensuring the village received all the S106 benefits highlighted in the Action Plan and that these were not distributed within East Herts or further afield in Hertfordshire. In particular, the Parish Council asks that, if at all possible, the costs for the work needed to the Children's Centre footpath (see below) is funded from S106 contributions.

It is anticipated that Fairview will submit their planning application in the New Year once the NP is adopted by EHDC and the site has been released from its Green Belt designation.

- **Document Storage**

Now the Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion the Parish Council will need a plan for storing the documents that relate to the Plan. Currently the documents are in a Dropbox, which belongs to Steering Group member, Charles Clark.

Many of the relevant documents are already hosted on the Parish Council website. The remainder will need to be stored by the Parish Council so Charles Clark can have his Dropbox back.

It was agreed to place digital storage on the October Parish Council agenda.

**Agenda: 10/2023**

### **Footpath – Children’s Centre**

Report from Charles Clark, NP Steering Group: Latest Position and Estimated Costs of Extension to Footpath 17:

As you are aware, one of the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is the creation on an extension to Footpath 17 which links Rectory Lane with Glebe Close. It runs between the school site and the end houses in each street and is the main pedestrian entrance to the school.

Some of the responses to the NP have requested that this path be extended along the perimeter of the Children Centre site to provide access to the Gatekeeper Estate. At present, the residents are able to obtain this access when the Children Centre site is being used which is usually 08:00 to 19:00 on days when the primary school is open. The land in question is owned by Hertfordshire County Council.

I have been in e-mail correspondence with HCC, and it seems that they are willing to allow this to go ahead and for the resulting footpath to be adopted formally as part of Footpath 17 provided that they incur no costs in doing so.

I have obtained the following estimates of cost, all are net of VAT:

HCC legal costs	£1,000
Carter Jonas (new lease agreement with YMCA)	£2,884
Creating the path (excluding fencing)	£18,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£21,884</b>

As the fencing work would require the re-siting of the two existing pedestrian gates, I would expect it to be quite expensive. I would also allow a contingency sum to be added as both of the quotes for the surfacing work were obtained by HCC without a site visit by the contractors.

An overall budget of £30,000 may be advisable until we can obtain firm prices.

After discussion Parish Councillors agreed that Cllr. Bell should obtain quotations for the following.

- 4 additional copies of the Neighbourhood plan, to be made available during the referendum
- Printing of leaflet for village leaflet drop and posters for display around the village (from two printers)
- Banner from 1<sup>st</sup> Call Signs **Action: C Bell**

Cllr. Bell will oversee publicity. Based on personal experience, Cllr. Lewis recommended going out early with the leaflet drop and then ramping up publicity closer to the referendum date. **Action: C. Bell**

Cllr. Waltham said she was keen for Jacqueline Veater to continue to support the NP through the master planning processes, especially as Locality UK are happy to support financing her involvement.

Parish Councillors were in agreement. Cllr. Waltham to submit a grant application to Locality UK.

**Action: E. Waltham**

### **b) Police & Crime Commissioner – update on speed sign funding request Road Safety Fund ‘Application for 1 SID and 2 Sockets’ bid**

Police & Crime Commissioner wrote on 12 July informing the Parish Council that former Cllr. Michael Smith’s funding application for one Speed Indicator Device and 2 sockets has been successful.

The Clerk to e-mail County Cllr. Ken Crofton to find out when the installations are likely to take place.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### **c) Election of Members of Committees and Appointment of Trustees**

Cllr. Waltham explained, for the benefit of new Parish Councillors, the election of Parish Council members to committees. Parish Councillors are free to attend any committee meeting and can interchange between committees if they find they are not suited to the one they have been elected too. These appointments will take place again in May each year, during the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The purpose of the committees is to reduce the load on the full Parish Council during its meetings. In-between meetings members get together to do things and then give their recommendations to the full Parish Council during the monthly meetings. Cllrs. Waltham, White, Meischke and Kirk have already agreed to produce their reports in advance of the Parish Council meetings and e-mail them to all Parish Councillors. Often decisions can be made between meetings via e-mail and other platforms.

Cllr. Waltham said it is exciting to have new Parish Councillors on board with their new views. If Councillors have any problems, there are several experienced Councillors who can help. For the time being, things will be kept running as they are, before taking on any changes in the future.

The current Chairs of the individual committees explained the roles of their committees.

Parish Councillors present at the meeting approved the following elections of members of the committees. The committee chairs remain unchanged. The Chair and Vice-Chairs are automatic members on all committees and will attend meetings whenever possible.

- **Budget & Finance**

Cllr. Nicola White (Chair)                      Cllr. Michael Brooks  
Cllr. Mark Richardson

- **Environment**

Cllr. Annabel Kirk (Chair)                      Cllr. Michael Brook  
Cllr. Nicola White

- **Planning**

Cllr. Clive Bell                                      Cllr. Richard Lewis

- **Neighbourhood Plan – Steering Group**

Cllr. Clive Bell                                      Cllr. Catherine Hammon  
Cllr. Emma Waltham

- **Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Trustees**

Cllr. John Meischke (Chair)                      Cllr. Richard Lewis (to be confirmed)  
Cllr. Nicola White                                      Mr. Michael Smith

Cllr. Lewis said he will need to obtain permission from the company he works for before confirming his Trustee appointment **Action: R. Lewis**

Cllr. Meischke said that when he retires from the Parish Council, he would like to put his name forward as Community Hall caretaker. This will need to be discussed by the Trustees and their proposals taken forward. **Agenda: Trustees**

- **Publicity**

Cllr. White suggested that the Parish Council form a publicity group to advertise what the Parish Council are doing and encourage volunteers to come forward to help with projects in the village.

This item to be put on the November agenda. **Agenda: 11.2023**

**d) Letters of planned resignations from 2 Parish Councillors**

Cllr. Christine Dinnin submitted her letter of resignation, which will take affect directly after this meeting closes. She was first elected in May 1983 and has seen many changes over her 40 years in office.

Parish Councillors thanked Cllr. Dinnin for her years of service.

Cllr. John Meischke has also written a letter of resignation which will come into effect directly after the December 2023 Parish Council meeting. Cllr. Meischke was elected in May 1995. He was one of 12 candidates during the only election the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council has had since its first meeting on 4 December 1894. He left the Parish Council a couple of years later for a few months, before rejoining again.

The Clerk to notify EHDC of Cllr. Dinnin's resignation and on receipt of their notices of vacancy, publish it on the Parish Council website, Facebook page and notice boards. **Action: J. Allsop**

## 7. Planning

Cllr. White provided the following report.

**a) Applications**

<b>Parish Council Agreement</b>	
<b>i) 3 Blue Hill Cottages High Elms Lane (3/23/1393/HH)</b> Demolition of conservatory. Erection of a single storey rear extension incorporating roof lights and steel flue	No comment
<b>ii) Highfields Whempstead Road Whempstead (3/23/1482/VAR)</b> Variation of condition 2 (Approved plans) of planning approval 3/22/1166/FUL Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling. Amendments to levels, alterations to window sizes, alterations to roof profile and alterations to reduced	No comment

<b>iii) Station Road (3/23/1494/FUL)</b> Installation of a Vehicle Impact Protection Barrier <b>Note:</b> The barrier is required for safety purposes. Access to the land at this point is not an authorised public right of way. Although in common use, the barrier is not expected to hinder any access to the field at this location. <b>Discussed:</b> A possible Rights of Way issue	No comment   <b>Action: J. Allsop</b>
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b) **Decisions**

	<b>EHDC Decision</b>
<b>i) Lane Croft, Perrywood Lane (3/23/1216/PNHH)</b> - Erection of single storey rear extension. Depth 8.00 metres, Maximum height 2.68 metres, Eaves height 2.68 metres.	Permission refused
<b>ii) Watton Mill, Mill Lane (3/23/0885/FUL)</b> - Additional floor to existing office building	Permission refused
<b>iii) 33 Rivershill (3/23/0953/HH)</b> - Insertion of dormer window to front. Part First floor and part two storey side extension, two storey rear extension with insertion of windows to flank elevations and partial garage conversion	Permission refused
<b>iv) 17 High Street (3/23/1215/HH)</b> - Part retrospective planning application for the construction of an ancillary garden room outbuilding in the rear garden for storage and a home gym	Permission granted

**8. Reports**a) **Committees****Budget & Finance**

Cllr. White reported on the following items.

• **Monthly accounts**

<b>Watton-at-Stone Parish Council</b>		
<b>Petty Cash –Receipts</b>		<b>Petty cash – Payments</b>
None		None
<b>Payments</b>		
Google	Google workspace - direct debit	£9.20
NCD	Grass cutting and gardening work on sportsfield	1,116.00
Grassroots	War memorial Maintenance – June 2023	50.40
Govresources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan - consultation work	660.00
Adam Welch	Strim nettles £50, cut back Limes £140, cut hedge to school lane £120	310.00
Jane Allsop	BT phone calls - May = £22.49 - June =£23.43	45.92
Adam Welch	½ year payment of scheduled works	1,450.00
NCD	Work to football goals	732.00
TreeSmiths	work to trees on Watton Green overgrowing the Brambles	540.00
RBRA	Donation towards running costs	30.00
J. Allsop	July salary	1,138.30
Rosemary Brown	32 hours litterpick @ £11	352.00
NCD	Grass cutting work on sportsfield	792.00
CPRE	Annual membership no 706405	48.00
Grassroots	War memorial Maintenance – July 2023	50.40
Jane Allsop	BT phone calls - July	37.86
Google	Google workspace - direct debit	9.20
J. Allsop	August salary	1,138.10
Rosemary Brown	32 hours litterpick @ £11	352.00
		<b>£8,861.38</b>
<b>Receipts</b>		
Santander	Interest on deposit account	11.84
Jackie Tingir	Allotment deposit and water charges	56.00
Tennis Club	½ year fees	419.00
Watton Ramblers	Donation	30.00
C. Myburgh	Allotment deposit and water charges	56.00
Cricket Club	Use of sportsfield	615.00
Macey Birleson	Allotment deposit	50.00
Nationwide	Interest on deposit account	102.80
Santander	Interest on deposit account	13.37
Santander - account	Debit cards wrong issued on 2-sign a/c	75.00
Groundwork UK	Grant for NP	1020.00
		<b>2449.01</b>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Michelle Ballinger – donation	3.00	The Soccer store – Jr. football net
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion – July	45.00	
Rosemary Brown – Pav & meeting room –	90.00	
Archery – Main Hall – July	120.00	
Rosemary Brown – Pav & meeting room	100.50	
Tracy Jenkins – Pavilion	25.00	
Table Tennis – Main Hall – July	£196.00	
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion – Aug	45.00	
Floodlighting donations to 29.08.23	26.00	
Riaz Rashid – 4 weeks Pavilion hire	45.32	
Archery – Main Hall – August	60.00	
	<b>£755.82</b>	
<b>Payments</b>		
British gas	Electricity	129.40
HMRC	VAT return – May 2023	265.65
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 4 of 10	55.00
British gas	Gas	17.54
Floodlighting	replacement of no 1 ballast unit on tennis court	557.40
Herts Fire Protection		197.28
HCC	cleaning materials and supplies	152.87
Rosemary Brown	28 hours cleaning @ £11 per hour	308.00
Lisa Coleman	Cancelled booking, refer to income dated 31.07.23	41.25
British gas	Electricity	137.50
HMRC	VAT return - June	189.81
East Herts Council	Rates - payment 5 of 10	55.00
British gas	Gas	27.77
James Turner		143.34
Castle Water		364.55
Rosemary Brown	26 hours cleaning @ £11 per hour	286.00
		<b>2928.36</b>
<b>Receipts</b>		
Santander	Interest	11.83
Janine - Bounce	Main Hall - May - June	351.50
Melanie Hague	Main Hall & Pavilion 1st 50% MH = Pav 13.05.23	38.00
Ildiko Imre-Karda	Meeting room on 20.07.23	28.00
Alison Arnold	Main Hall & Pav - 50% September 23	118.75
Tracy Jenkins	Pavilion hire 50% ON 21.08.23	13.50
Lisa Coleman	deposit cancelled see Aug expenditures	41.25
Santander	Interest	13.35
Stylianou	deposit for 30 September	33.25
Janine - Bounce	Main Hall - July	161.50
Ildiko Imre-Karda	Meeting room on 17.08.23	28.00
Jenkins		13.50
Melanie Hague	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	38.00
		<b>890.43</b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Bank signatories**

- **The Santander**

Cllr. White said that Santander will need to be notified of the resignation of Cllr. Dinnin, who is a signatory on the two Parish Council and two Community Hall accounts.

The Clerk to obtain the necessary forms for completion.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Nationwide**

New signatories are required for the Parish Council Nationwide 95-day saver account. Currently Cllr. Meischke, the Clerk and former Cllr. Mrs. Helen McCash are registered signatures.

It was agreed to remove Cllr. Meischke and Mrs. McCash as signatures and add Cllrs. White, Brooks, Kirk and Richardson.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Budgets 2024/25**  
Cllr. White said she will need Parish Councillors items for the 2024/2025 budgets, including quotations, by the end of October.
- **Allotment water charges for period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024**  
It was agreed that the water charges remain unchanged for period 1 October to 30 September 2024 at £12.00 for a large plot and £6.00 for a small one.
- **Laptop**  
Parish Councillors agreed that a new laptop should be purchased for the Clerk, to replace the existing one that has become unreliable. There is £1,000 in this year's budget towards a new laptop. **Action: J. Allsop**

## Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Junior football goalpost net**  
The new junior football goalpost net has been fitted. Unfortunately, someone has already burnt a hole in it. Cllr. Meischke to repair it. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Painting of car park side doors**  
Mark Blacktin has completed painting the car park side doors. He also carried out additional work at the hall, for which he did not charge.
- **Cleaners**  
Rosemary Brown has verbally resigned from her cleaning and litterpicking jobs. Her last day of work will be on Friday 7 October. Maureen Monk, who assists Rosemary is happy to continue working alongside a new cleaner. An advert was placed on Facebook and two people have come forward. Both are interested in doing the cleaning and litterpick work. One has been interviewed and is excellent. The other is due to be interviewed on Thursday this week. Cllrs. Meischke and White to make a recommendation on who is the most suitable candidate. **Action: J. Meischke/N. White**
- **Swings**  
EHDC e-mailed on 5 September stating "The Play Inspection Co. has carried out the inspection at Watton-at-Stone Rec and found that there is a missing seat connection. We would recommend this is repaired ASAP"  
Cllr. Meischke took immediate action to replace the missing parts and pictures of the repaired swing have been e-mailed to EHDC.
- **Football usage**  
Cllr. Meischke thanked both Cllr. Kirk and Michael Smith for confirming with Derek Hill that the Youth Football would like sole use of the sportsfield football pitch for this season.
- **Community Hall caretaker**  
Cllr. Meischke said he will be e-mailing Parish Councillors expressing his interest in becoming the Community Hall caretaker when he steps down as a Parish Councillor after the December 2023 Parish Council meeting.
- **Crack in wall up by entrance**  
Cllr. Meischke to obtain quotations, for budget purposes, for the repair of the crack in the wall by the main entrance. **Action: J. Meischke**  
Cllr. Lewis commented that when he arrived at the Community Hall, the rain was overflowing the gutter. Cllr. Meischke explained that a few years ago an overlaid roof was installed over the existing one. This was done because in high winds the original roof was lifting. Since then, during heavy rain the water misses the gutter because of the speed it travels down the smooth surface of the roof. Some modifications have been made to the guttering to relieve this problem, but in very heavy rain it still persists.
- **Car park**  
Dr Norden e-mailed on 28 August as follows.  
"Local residents are aware that the Parish Council's Application to EHDC to extend the Community Hall Car Park was refused in April 2022 and we are not aware of any amendment to this decision.  
<https://publicaccess.eastherts.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=R6ZTW7GLJD900&activeTab=summary>  
On Saturday 26 August we were very surprised to see numerous cars parking on an Extension to the current car park - please see attached photos taken by a local resident.  
The current layout and lack of signage of this area invites its use as a Car Park Extension for which permission was actually refused.  
Rather than initially make a formal complaint to EHDC I thought I would write to you. Allegations of a breach of Planning Decisions are serious and we would be grateful if you could deal with this urgently."

Cllr. Meischke said that he had spoken to Dr Norden to assure him that the Parish Council were not doing anything illegal because vehicles can be parked on the sportsfield on 28 separate days during any one year. That is a point of fact, and the Parish Council are not trying to find a loophole.

Cllrs. Waltham, Meischke and White have drafted a letter of response to Dr. Norden explaining the situation and the fact that on the day in question the Bull was having a craft day and shutting their car park. On that same day there was Football and Cricket on the sportsfield, and the Watton Cricketers were asked to not park in the High Street, as they usually do, but to park on the field.

Parish Councillors agreed to reply to Dr. Norden's e-mail as directed by Cllrs. Waltham, Meischke and White.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## Environment Committee

Cllr. Kirk e-mailed her Environment Committee to Parish Councillors on

- **The Lammas**

The grass is due to be cut soon by the Stanleys.

We have asked Tony Bradford whether he could put together a group of volunteers to fix the steps on the Lammas bank. If not, we will approach the Scouts to see if they are interested in doing this.

We are arranging a meeting between us and the McPhersons to discuss the open riverbank opposite their house. Cllr. Dinnin and I believe their contractor removed quite a bit of planting when they used the Lammas to access the garden last year. This combined with the subsequent overzealous cutting by the Stanleys left the bank quite exposed. I have asked the Clerk to instruct the Stanleys not to cut this area so it will grow back in time. Cllr. Dinnin and I think that if the McPhersons want more immediate privacy, they could pay for some shrubs, which could be planted there to narrow it to the original size of the cut back made by the EA.

Cllr. Kirk agreed to speak to Tony Bradford about the Lammas steps when she meets him up at the Cottage site.

**Action: A Kirk**

Michael Smith was invited to give his report on the Lammas

One more cut is due around October. The grass is being managed differently because the contractors are not able to dispose of grass to local farmers, as they do not want it because of the large quantities of faecal matter. Some areas of the grass are still being cut while others being left.

Herts Trust have suggested the idea of dew ponds on the Lammas. This would encourage amphibious animals such as frogs. In recent years, when the land has flooded, the water has remained on the land for several months.

The notching of the Mill Lane weir is looking like a distinct option again. This would make a huge difference to the flow of the river and consequently the wildlife within it. Another option that has been discussed is to reroute part of the river over to its original path. This might upset some of the residents of Lammas Road as their gardens would no longer go down to the river.

Michael Smith said that in 2013 the Parish Council cleared a lot of timber from the riverbank, which was mainly Willow and Aspen. A lot of what they are doing now is dependant along the improvement of the river, which includes keeping the cleared riverbank areas open. Six small cuts in the river were made to allow the public to go down to the river. The Parish Council need to ensure that they keep these open and are not swayed by residents living on the opposite banks to have them closed for privacy reasons. When these houses were built, they had open views of the river.

The six cuts are the only access that the public have in the village, as all other sections are in private ownership.

- **Watton Green**

Cllr. Kirk had nothing to report.

Michael Smith said that another grass cut is due on Watton Green to keep it tidy for winter. Wildflowers have appeared since the management of Watton Green has changed. Some of the grass only has one cut each year avoiding the first cut of the season.

The Oak tree with the seat around it has increased its girth and the seat will need to be repositioned, so it does not harm the trunk of the tree, or the tree break the seat. Mr. Smith agreed to do this work. **Action: M. Smith**

- **Cottage site**

Tony Bradford will be doing a tour of the site on the afternoon of Sunday 17 September. I have informed councillors in case they would like to attend.

- **Allotment**

The Clerk has e-mailed plot holders who seem to not be maintaining their plots. Most have responded with an update. I am aware of issues affecting certain plot holders which would have impacted on them managing their plot. We have several people on the waiting list who I will contact in October once we know which plots are available.



- **War Memorial**

Under the guidance of former Cllr. David Stock, Grassroots have submitted a revised quotation of £204.55 plus VAT for the following

- Coronus Alba 'Dogwood' x 2
- Hebe 'Autumn Glory' x 2
- Hebe 'Pink Princess' x 1
- Ceanothus 'Delight' x 1
- Photinia 'Red Robin' x 1
- Euonymus 'Emerald Gaiety' x
- 1 Compost Delivery, Supply and Labour

Parish Council agreed accept the quotation. Cllr. Kirk to instruct Grassroots accordingly. **Action: A. Kirk**

- **School Lane**

The hedgerows at the top of the lane are still an issue - we need to speak to the owners and ask for them to cut the hedges back.

Cllr. Kirk and the Clerk to do this.

**Action: A. Kirk/ J. Allsop**

- **Community Orchard**

We need to chase HCC regarding the possible use of the Gatekeeper meadow area. I do not think the allotment area will be suitable.

**Action: A. Kirk/ J. Allsop**

- **Condition of the grass verges on Rectory Lane**

Linda Harwood, who lives in Rectory Lane, e-mailed on 2 September regarding the terrible state of the grassed area on Rectory Lane, due to vehicles parking on it.

This item to be placed the October agenda.

**Agenda: 10.2023**

- **Pump**

Cllr. Kirk said that the village pump is in a poor condition. Cllr. Meischke said that the pump belongs to Woodhall Estate.

Cllr. Kirk to contact the Woodhall Estate to ask them to carry out the repair and maintenance work required.

**Action: A. Kirk.**

- **Wooden Benches**

The wooden benches in the village need painting. It had previously been agreed that the Environment Committee would inspect the benches to see if one or more could be replaced with a recycled bench. The jubilee bench opposite the doctor's surgery being one example. Cllr. Kirk agreed to investigate this with her committee members.

**Action: A. Kirk**

- **Fairview New Homes - land along the Stevenage Road**

Michael Smith suggested that the Parish Council contact Tony Bradford re the management of the Fairview land along Stevenage Road as it would be a diversity gain for them and for the village and will need a funding pot applied to it for its maintenance.

Cllrs. Waltham and Bell to investigate this.

**Action: E. Waltham/C. Bell**

## 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. These readings are uploaded to the providers websites.

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

Done.

- iv) **Monthly village-report**

Cllr. Meischke completed the report with Cllrs. Lewis and Richardson on 31 August 2023. The main points identified in the report are highlighted below.

- **Small swings** - missing bolt, which has now been replaced
- **Culverts** - not bad, but quite overgrown hard to see.

Michael Smith suggested that the Parish Council wait for the leaves to have died off this autumn and then inspect the culverts again.

- **Fly tipping** – by Scout Hut recycling bin - This has now been removed.

- v) **Weekly sportsfield-report**  
Nothing to report.
- vi) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**  
Cllr. Hammon continues to do regular defibrillator checks.
- vii) **Website/Facebook**
  - Website & Facebook: Co-option of two new Parish Councillors. **Action: J. Allsop**
- viii) **Highway issues**  
Nothing to report.
- ix) **Dog fouling reports**  
Nothing to report.
- x) **Police reports**  
Refer to item 2, Public participation.

## 9. Correspondence received

- a) **Citizens Advice**  
Citizens Advice East Herts have e-mailed requesting a donation towards their running costs. Although volunteers give their time free of charge, it still costs over £250,000 per year to run core service (more with projects).  
Parish Councillors approved a donation of £250. The Clerk to notify Citizens Advice East Herts accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**
- b) **Dr Norden - Community Hall car park**  
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – final bullet point – Car park.
- c) **Text message from Mr. & Mrs. McPherson**  
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Committee - The Lammas.

## 10. Reports from other organisations

- **Allotments and Garden Association**  
Cllr. Kirk said that at a recent Allotment and Garden Association meeting, they requested that the Parish Council allow them to have a BBQ on the allotments. It was agreed they could, provided that neighbouring properties, including Glebe Court have advanced knowledge. Also, that they ensure that no smoke blows towards residents' windows. Cllr. Kirk to notify them accordingly. **Action: A. Kirk**

## 11. Items for the Parish News

The following items were identified for inclusion in the October 2023 issue of the Parish News.

- Co-option of Cllrs. Richard Lewis and Mark Richardson.
- Resignation of Cllr. Christine Dinnin. **Action: J. Allsop**

**Meeting closed: 21:44.**

**The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 10 October 2023.**