

## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 13 February 2024

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr Nicola White (Chair)	Cllr Richard Lewis (Vice-Chair)
	Cllr Michael Brooks	Cllr Annabel Kirk
	Cllr Catherine Hammon	Cllr Mark Richardson (arrived at 1925)
	Cllr Darren Appleby (arrived at 20:30)	County Cllr Ken Crofton
	Clerk: Jane Allsop	Victoria Dover

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs Emma Waltham.

### 2. Public participation

None.

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

Cllr White said she had four additional items.

- **Cllr Emma Waltham - extension of leave of absence**

It was unanimously agreed to extend Cllr. Waltham's leave of absence for an additional six months.

EHDC to be notified accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Cllr. White to notify Cllr. Waltham accordingly.

**Action: N. White**

- **High Street litterbins**

Cllr. White said that the cleaner, Debi Lee has highlighted a litter problem in the High Street. This is around the Budgens and Crumbs area. Debi regularly picks up litter in this area, even though she is not scheduled to do so.

The large EHDC litterbin formerly sited between Crumbs and Fortune's House takeaway was removed. Crumbs had objected to the bin because it attracts wasps and flies in the warmer weather.

Most of the litter is generated from Budgens customers. The previous supermarket owners had a bin located outside their shop for customers to use.

Cllr. White agreed to speak to the owners of Budgens.

**Action: N. White**

- **Dog waste bags**

The Clerk reported that over 800 dog waste bags are being used each month from the dispenser at the end of Glebe Close.

The last purchase of ten boxes (800 bags per box) was purchased in late August at cost of £246 including delivery (excluding VAT). The previous purchase had lasted 16 months, which equates to 500 bags a month.

Michael Smith takes the dog bags up to a man in Glebe Close (two boxes at a time) who keeps the dispenser filled up.

It was agreed that when the bags run out, we do not repurchase but wait and see if the area around the school starts having a problem. Cllr. Kirk said that the main dog waste problem comes from a couple of dog owners in the area. The lack of dog waste bags would not change this.

The Clerk to inform Michael Smith and suggest that the dispenser is filled less often until the bags run out.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Standing orders** – these need to be updated, preferably for adoption at the Annual meeting of the Parish Council in May.

**Action: N. White**

Mark Richardson arrived at the meeting.

### 4. Parish Councillor Vacancy and Co-option

Cllr. White said that currently we have one vacancy to co-opt on the Parish Council.

The Parish Council should hear from EHDC on Thursday 15 February informing us if we can co-opt the second vacancy.

Applications to fill the current vacancy have been received from Terry Askew and Jane Dodson.

Cllr. White to contact both applicants so that she and Cllr. Lewis can meet with them.

**Action: N. White/R. Lewis**

Cllr. White said that the Parish Council does not have to co-opt if they do not have anyone suitable.

### 5. Declaration of interests

None.



**c) Action Points resolved**

1. Email Cllr Thomas copy of dog fouling poster
2. Draft response letter re Fairview planning application and submit to EHDC
3. Inform Derek Hill of EHDC funding available
4. Update Parish Councillor vacancy advert
5. Email the Clerk job description advert for posting on Facebook, website, and notice boards
6. Show the Clerk how to use Google workspace
7. Find out how accessible defibrillator machines are in the village
8. Order new defibrillator pads and give them to Mr. Meischke for fitting on 28.01.24
9. Submit completed Precept form for 2024/25 to EHDC
10. Add Cllr Richardson as a bank signatory to all Parish Council and Community Hall accounts
11. Clear fallen branches on the Lammas
12. Request that the recycle clothes bin in Mill Lane be emptied
13. Add election of new vice-chair, advert for new clerk and Parish Council vacancy for publicity
14. Post items identified for publicity

**7. Specific items****a) Neighbourhood plan**

Cllr Hammon reported on the following.

- Fairview New Homes have indicated to Clive Bell of the NP steering group that they will be removing the gated entrance from their plans which the PC had objected to in our response to their planning application.
- They have sent examples of their proposed bridge. Members of the NP group will be objecting to the plans. The drawings include large steps which would not allow easy access for disabled people, wheelchair users, pushchairs, and cyclists from using the bridge. Joe Thomas has informed the NP group that the bridge could not be included in the Fairview application because they had not provided plans for the provision of the bridge.
- Fairview have offered to have a Zoom meeting with the NP group. Agreeing to do so would keep an open dialogue with Fairview. When a date for this Zoom meeting is arranged, Cllr. Lewis will try and join.
- Cllr. Hammon will ask Charles Clark if he would register the Neighbourhood Plan's Community Assets, which will include the Methodist Church building.

Action: C. Hammon

**b) Appointment of new Clerk**

Cllr. White welcomed Victoria Dover, who has been offered the position of Clerk when the current Clerk steps down on 31 March 2024. She started working with the current Clerk on 1 February.

**c) New /additional defibrillator for the village**

Victoria Dover said that child defibrillator pads are now available for the Parish Council defibrillator housed in the BT box. It was agreed to purchase a set as adult pads cannot be used on children.

Action: J. Allsop

The Clerk confirmed that the defibrillators at Watton Place Clinic and the Watton school are only accessible during their opening hours.

It was agreed that the north end of the village would be a suitable location for a new defibrillator. Funding opportunities may arise during the Fairview New Homes build. It was agreed to defer this item until September.

Agenda: 09.2024

**d) Disaster recovery plan**

Cllr. White said that the Parish Council need a task force to put together a disaster recovery plan. Examples of a disaster could include the Community Hall burning down or a major flooding in the village.

In addition the Major Incident Plan, which was produced in 2009, is out of date and needs updating.

This item to be put on the May agenda, when the new Clerk is in place.

Agenda: 05.2024

**e) Engagement event for the village and proposal team**

Parish Councillors discussed holding a fun based 'Meet your councillors' event, which hopefully would include both County Cllr. Crofton and District Cllr Joe Thomas. The Woodhall Estate are also keen to join in the event.

Cllr. Richardson suggested that we use the Church Fete for this event. Parish Councillors liked this idea and suggested that their County and District Cllrs should join in too.

Cllr. White agreed to progress this forward.

Action: N. White

Cllr. Crofton asked if the Parish Council were going to hold any D-day celebrations on 6 June, to mark the 80-year anniversary. This item to be placed on the March agenda.

Agenda: 03.2024

## 8. Planning

Cllrs Lewis reported on the following items.

- **Appointment of member of planning Team**

Cllr. Lewis said that he can cope with the level of planning applications on his own at the moment.

It was agreed to leave the appointment of another Planning Team member for the time being.

### a) Applications

**i) 49a High Street (3/23/1752/HH) –RECONSULTATION**

Construction of single storey rear outbuilding

This is a resubmission of a previous application, to which the Parish Council made a no comment response.

Several of the Beaneside neighbours, whose gardens back onto 49a High Street objected.

The resubmitted plans show the removal of a window facing towards the Beaneside.

It was agreed to resubmit our no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

Cllr. Joe Thomas, in his email report copied to all Parish Councillors, included his response to this application and the reasons why he still opposed it.

**ii) Home Farm Cottage, Woodhall Park (3/23/2075/HH) –RECONSULTATION**

Removal of conservatory. Proposed replacement conservatory

The Parish Council does not object to any Woodhall Park planning applications if it does not have a detrimental visible impact within the parish.

It was agreed to send a no comment response to the planning department.

Action: J. Allsop

**iii) 35 Moorymead Close (3/24/0095/HH)**

Retrospective application for the conversion of garage to habitable room with removal of door for window

Cllr. Lewis said the work on this retrospective application has been completed. There is no additional building footprint to this property, it is just the conversion of the garage to a room. There are nine other equivalent conversions in Moorymead Close.

It was agreed to submit a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

### a) Appeal

**i) Lane Croft Perrywood Lane (LPA Ref: 23/00102/PRIOR re application 3/23/1216/PNHH)**

Erection of single storey rear extension. Depth 8.00 metres, Maximum height 2.68 metres, Eaves height 2.68 metres

The Parish Council made a no comment response to the original application and will not be submitting any further comments.

**ii) Watton Mill, Mill Lane (LPA Appeal Ref: 23/00110/REFUSE re application 3/23/0885/FUL)**

Additional floor to existing office building

In addition to the Parish Councils original objections to this application, Cllr. Hammon suggested we highlight relevant provisions of the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan. This was agreed by Parish Councillors. Cllr. Hammon to give the Clerk some appropriate text to forward to the planning inspectorate.

Action: C. Hammon/J. Allsop

**iii) Barn 2 Gregorys Farm (LPA Appeal Ref: 23/00076/REFUSE re application 3/23/1451/FUL)**

Change of use of existing holiday letter accommodation building to single residential dwelling house.

Cllr Lewis visited the applicants Matt and Alison Stanley, on site at Gregorys farm to discuss their application.

Barn 2 is currently a disused barn conversion with permission to property let, but the previous owner went bust. They would like to live there and be close to the farm, which is a crucial factor, especially in times such as lambing season.

There are already residential and other holiday rentals on this site. The Parish Council originally made a no comment response to this application.

Cllr. Lewis recommended that the Parish Council write to the planning inspectorate as follows.

The Parish Council has no objections to this application.

They are supportive of the applicant's business in this rural part of our parish and understand the need to live close to his livestock.

Action: J. Allsop

Cllr. Thomas has written a detailed letter of support to the planning inspectorate.

### b) Decisions

**i) Lane Croft Perrywood Lane (3/23/2251/PNHH)**

Single storey rear extension: Depth 8.00 metres, Maximum height 2.68 metres, Eaves height 2.68 metres

EHDC Prior Approval is not Required/Permission granted

Cllr. Appleby arrived at the meeting.

## 9. Reports

### a) Teams

#### Budget & Finance

Cllr Richardson reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash – Payments	
Jo Jamison – Allotment Rent	22.00	None	
Com Hall – reimbursement for payment made in error (see payments)	<u>104.99</u>		
	<b><u>126.99</u></b>		
Payments			
Google	Google workspace - direct debit		13.80
Adam Welch	cut down cherry tree on allotments		290.00
DefibStore	defibrillator pads		80.40
BT phone charges	October - Dec 2023		72.66
Allotment & Garden	Allotment insurance for 2024		105.07
J. Allsop	Com Hall payment made from PC a/c - see petty cash income		104.99
Wages & salaries	January 2024		<u>1342.88</u>
			<b><u>2009.80</u></b>
Receipts			
Santander	Interest		15.29
Les Newton	Allotment Rent 2023/2024		72.00
Nationwide	Interest on deposit account		<u>144.31</u>
			<b><u>231.60</u></b>
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Archery	210.00	Reimbursement for payment made in error by PC for 10 packs of liquid soap	
Floodlighting - Donations	234.00		<u>104.99</u>
Tony Silvestri	60.00		<b><u>104.99</u></b>
Watton Woollies	31.50		
Table Tennis	<u>164.00</u>		
	<b><u>699.50</u></b>		
Payments			
RVTV	Call out fee re repair of CCTV		138.00
Wages	January 2024		220.00
British Gas	Electricity		227.78
HMRC	VAT Return – October		92.19
John Meischke	Caretaker Duties – 16 x £15		240.00
Castle Water	Water Supply		<u>35.25</u>
British Gas	Gas		<u>180.28</u>
			<b><u>1133.50</u></b>
Receipts			
Santander	Interest		20.35
Emma White	Main Hall & Pavilion - deposit 09.03.24		18.00
Ildiko Imre-Karda	Meeting room on 18.01.24		28.00
Triform Brickwork	Leah Sands - pavilion hire -first aid		67.50
Joe Thomas	Meeting room on 20.01.24		18.00
We do Care	Main hall - 1/5 hours on 02/02.24		<u>18.00</u>
			<b><u>169.85</u></b>

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Update on bank signatories**

The Clerk said that following receipt of two letters from Santander (both dated 4 January) she called Santander to ask why they were requesting former Cllrs. Dinnin and Meischke to approve signature changes to the bank accounts when they have already been removed as bank signatories on all the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts.

The Santander agent went through all the documentation and agreed that the information sent to them was correct and did not require any further action. He agreed to pass his findings onto the back-office.

- **Annual review of documents**

- **Financial Regulations**

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of the 'Financial regulations' document, dated March 2023, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2024 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 March 2023, and agreed no changes were required. This document to be re-dated February 2024 and uploaded to the website.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Review Asset registers**

The asset register has been updated for 2023/24 to include purchases, such as laptops, during this financial year. Items such as outdated keyboard and computer mice to be removed from the register and a copy emailed to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

The Budget & Finance Team to look at this document in April, to ensure that the Parish Council insurance cover is sufficient. The insurance renewal date is 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

Agenda: 04/2024

- **Long term capital expenditures**

This document to be revised ahead of the Budget & Finance team looking at 2025/6 budget in November. An extended timeslot to be allocated to the October Council agenda to discuss Long Term Capital Expenditure.

Agenda: 10/2024

## Community Hall Trustees

Cllr Lewis reported on the following items.

- **Report on meeting held on 4 February 2024**

Prior to this meeting, all Parish Councillors were emailed a copy of the Trustees minutes dated 4 February.

Cllr. Lewis went through the recommendations of the Trustees as follows.

**Recommendations:**

- Agree not to replace the specified windows and doors but arrange for them to be repaired and stained.
- Accept Mark Blacktin's quotation to repair and stain the high-level windows.
- Agree not to replace the floodlighting coin meters with card readers.
- Form a lead group with a more holistic approach towards hiring costs, improving hirings and social media.

Parish Councillors approved the above recommendations.

Trustees Michael Smith and Darren Appleby to ask Mark Blacktin to quote for repairing and staining the pavilion and meeting room windows and main entrance doors.

Action: M. Smith/D. Appleby

Trustee Michael Smith and Cllr Appleby will meet with Mark Blacktin to discuss the repair of the play area safety surface highlighted in the annual playground inspection report.

Action: M. Smith/D. Appleby

Mark Blacktin's quotation to repair the perimeter wall and damaged external toilet door was approved by email prior to the Trustees meeting.

The Trustees will look at finding a vandal resistant door for the external toilets.

Action: Trustees

Cllr. Lewis said he will look at putting together a proposal for a five-year vision for the Community Hall.

The Trustees will need to decide if they see the vision as continuing to maintain and repair the hall as it is or see a new vision for the hall with more potential opportunities. The vision will also include the use of the area of land which had planning permission for a car park extension refused. This proposal will be assessed at the same time as the Parish Council review their policies.

**Keyholders:** the Clerk has an action to list the names of all keyholders and which keys they hold.

Action: J. Allsop

**CCTV repairs** – the recorder on the CCTV system needs repairing. The cost of a new recorder is £325 and there have already been two call outs, at a cost of £190. If the new recorder is installed, there will be another £115 call out fee, which includes one hours work to fit and test the recorder. If the installation and testing work extends beyond one hour, the additional hourly fee is £45. (All prices quoted above exclude VAT, which the Community Hall can claim back.)

The CCTV system is already 6 years old, and the Trustees have been actioned to consider if the existing CCTV system should be repaired, replaced with an alternative system, or removed altogether. Action: Trustees

**Caretaker report** - Cllr Lewis highlighted the main items in John Meischke's Caretaker report for the period 10 January to 7 February. A copy of this is attached to the Trustees minutes of February 2024.

- Blockage in the gutters on car park side of the building
- CCTV recorder problems
- Zumba electrical fault
- Toilet pan seat block is missing – John Meischke is trying to source a replacement.
- Graffiti removed from teen shelter
- Replacement parts for small swing seat have been fitted.
- Leaves at the rear of the Tennis court need clearing. The Tennis club to be asked to do this work.

**Action: N. White**

• **Potential booking for Scout Night Hike**

Cllr. White met with Scout event organiser, Peter Knight, to show him the Community Hall facilities and discuss hiring the facilities for their annual night hike on 28/29 September. The event would be held all day on Saturday 28 and finish between 01:00 and 02:00 on Sunday 29.

The Community Hall planning conditions state that the building must close by 22:30. Victoria Dover contacted EHDC planning department, who confirmed that the hall can stay open to allow the night hike to take place, provided we inform local residents.

Peter Knight is also looking at Cottered Village Hall as a possible venue, which is currently undergoing some refurbishment work. His preferred venue would have been Watton-at-Stone School, which he has used on numerous occasions, however they will no longer take any bookings.

The trustees will look at giving Peter Knight a special rate if they are awarded the booking. **Action: Trustees**

**Trustees' meetings** – Cllr. Lewis said the Trustees will meet again in late March / early April.

## Environment

Cllr Kirk reported on the following items.

**Lammas:** the Parish Council were successful in obtaining an HCC grant for 50 tree saplings, together with canes and protection guards. Tony Bradford has now planted the saplings which are a mixture of native hedgerow and woodland species. These trees replace the cherry tree which was removed from the allotments.

A letter of thanks to be sent to Tony Bradford.

**Action: N. White**

- **Cottage Site:** the Parish Council were also successful in obtaining an HCC grant for 100 tree saplings for the Cottage site. Tony Bradford will be planting these trees on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February. Parish councillors are welcome to attend!

- **Rectory Lane - grass verges**

The Clerk emailed Jon Hart (Senior Environmental Inspector, EHDC) about the Rectory Lane grass verge. One of his colleagues Rowan Perrin (Senior Parks and Leisure Development Officer) produced the following options.

- Fencing the area off
- Creating bunds
- Creating parking spaces
- Planting shrubs and trees

Joe Thomas has been kept in the loop and is currently investigating with the Economic Development team if they can use any of the £25,000 earmarked by the district council (From the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) for tree planting for the grass verges on Rectory Lane.

Although planting trees is a good option, it will not resolve the parking problems in this area, which still need addressing.

- **Tree overhanging School Lane**

Refer to item 6 b 4, Review of actions - Obtain quotations for work to Maple Tree at the top of the sportsfield adjacent to School Lane.

- **Japanese knotweed encroachment onto Cottage site**

Refer to item 6 b 2, Review of actions - Contact EHDC about Japanese knotweed encroachment.

- **High Street traffic issues**

Cllrs. White, Kirk and Hammon, in liaison with Cllr. Crofton will reform the High Street traffic issues team.

- **Land for a Community Orchard**

Refer to item 6 b 6, Review of actions - Find out what the rules and regulations are for planting an orchard on S106 land.



- **Brown bins Waste:** Cllr. Kirk has approached East Herts to find out if they can have a day when local residents can collect some free compost created from the brown bin waste. This would be particularly helpful for allotment holders. Other district councils have done this in the past. Louise Ovington from EHDC said she would investigate and get back to her.

## b) Routine Reports

### i) Monthly village-report

Cllr Hammon completed the report on 12 February. The main points identified in the report are highlighted below.

- **Standing water** on the sports field above the cricket square, and on the Lammas (but both normal after lots of rain).
- **Mildew/green** on some of the play equipment (palace fortress and junior climbing frame)  
**Trim trail** – someone has hung "Don't feed the horses" signs on the apparatus at the top of the field (printed paper in a plastic pocket) – should we remove or replace with something more solid on the actual fence? Victoria Dover to ask Helen McCash for the contact details for the tenant who uses this field. **Action: V. Dover**
- **Tennis courts** – one of the slats on the barrier has broken and half fallen off (round the back where there used to be steps).  
The caretaker to be notified and asked to inspect and carry out repairs as required. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Allotment access** – as you go down the drive past Glebe House, some of the holly on the left needs trimming.
- **Salt bins – far end of Moorymead Close** - only half full. A few others need topping up as noted.  
NB there is a new bin on the corner of Station Road at the entrance to Clappers Lane (needs to be added to the master list?). Cllr. White said she had already done this.  
Cllr Crofton said that, to save money, HCC contractors only fill the salt bins once a year before the onset of winter. Parish Councils can fill them, and HCC will provide the salt.
- **Ornate village sign** – the bottom of the post is rotten on one side and soft to the touch.  
It was agreed to ask Michael Smith to look at the post. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **General highways/drainage** – on Church Lane, the drain just above the driveway for Lane Croft appears to be blocked – no water above it, but a lot of water is flowing out of it down Church Lane.  
Victoria Dover to report the blocked drain. **Action: V. Dover**  
The Clerk to email a copy of Cllr. Hammon's report to John Meischke (caretaker). **Action: J. Allsop**

### iv) Caretakers' report

Refer to item 9 a Community Hall Trustees.

### v) Defibrillator inspection

Cllr Hammon continues to do regular defibrillator checks.

### vi) Website/Facebook – feedback

Nothing to report.

### vii) Highway issues

Nothing to report.

### viii) Dog fouling reports

Nothing to report.

### ix) Police reports

On 5 February, PCSO Sally Brooks emailed the A6 Crime Reports January 2024. Watton-at-Stone had five items identified in this report.

## 10. Correspondence received.

None.

## 11. Reports from other organisations

- **River Beane Restoration Association** - Cllr. Brook said that their next meeting is on Tuesday 20 February.
- **EHDC event:** Cllr. Brook said that EHDC will be running their first LBGTOIA event in June 2024.

## 12. Items for publicity

The following item was identified for inclusion on the website and Facebook and Parish Council notice boards.

- Beaver trophy
- Tree on Lammas

**Action: N. White/J. Allsop**

**Meeting closed: 21.43.**

**The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 12 March 2024.**