

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 14 May 2024

Present:	Cllr. Nicola White (Chairperson)	Cllr. Darren Appleby
	Cllr. Richard Lewis (Vice Chair)	Cllr. Michael Brooks
	Cllr. Annabel Kirk	Cllr. Catherine Hammon
	Cllr. Joe Thomas	
		Clerk: Abigail Brown

Apologies for absence

County Councillor Ken Crofton

Public participation

Tim Walton

Fred Milner

Chair's/Clerk's report

- 19 Walkern Road Planning Permission - An amendment was received from EHDC. A 'no comment' was suggested and all present were in agreement.
- **Community Governance review** – The Parish Council has received communication from EHDC as they are carrying out a 'Review of Parish/ Town councils. Cllr White requested that the councillors read the Community Governance review information and to provide comments for June meeting. Clerk will resend the Governance Review information.

Action: A. Brown/All

Declaration of interests

None.

Minutes of the last meeting.

a) Acceptance

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 9 April 2024

Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes should be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1. Clerk to post on Facebook & 'Spotted In Watton' after Cllr White spoken to PC Sally Brooks regarding vandalism. Cllr White is yet to speak with PC Sally Brooks.
Action: N. White/A. Brown
2. Cllr Lewis will advise Tennis and Cricket Club to remain vigilant following thefts.
Action: R. Lewis
3. Cllr White will send the link to councillors for the new OWL community system – Completed
Action: N. White
4. Cllr White will speak to potential Parish Council candidates to meet and discuss their applications. Cllr White has met with several candidates and will continue to do so over the coming weeks.
Action: N. White
5. Clerk to issue new agreement for land access across Cottage Site. Agreement will be sent out shortly.
Action: A. Brown
6. Cllr Lewis will respond regarding Land Adj The Willows Perrywood Lane - Completed
Action: R. Lewis

7. Clerk will arrange a meeting with Helen McCash regarding external audit PKF.
Action: A. Brown
8. Clerk to collate a report showing recommendations for new bank account
Action: A. Brown
9. Meeting to confirm agreed contractual responsibilities with the Tennis Club
Action : R. Lewis
10. Arrange meeting with Watton Ladies and Watton Youth to discuss use of the pitch and price increase
Action : R. Lewis

c) Action points resolved

1. Clerk to arrange grass to be cut at side of Community Hall
Action: A. Brown
2. Clerk to issue new licence and see if ferrets can help with rat infestation on the allotments
Action: A. Brown
3. Clerk to arrange for CCTV to be fixed
Action: A. Brown
4. Enquire if fishing license is required
Action: M. Brooks
5. Easter Fair article for Facebook
Action: M. Richardson

Planning

a) Applications

Cllr Richard reported on the following planning applications, which he had e-mailed to all Parish Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Richard will contact neighbours for comments and update Clerk for appropriate response for 'no comment' which was agreed by all present.

19 Walkern Road (3/24/0726/HH)

Demolition of conservatory and erection of two storey rear extension

109 Great Innings South (3/24/0675/CLPO)

Loft conversion with rear dormer

33 Rivershill (3/24/0619/HH)

Two storey rear extension

Land adj The Willows, Perrywood Land (3/24/0621/FUL)

Erection of 2, five bedroomed dwellings

b) Decisions

i. Moorymead Close (3/24/0095/HH)

Retrospective application for the conversion of garaged to habitable room

- EHDC permission granted

Specific items

Neighbourhood plan

Cllr Hammon commented that Fairview have responded very well to all requests and made positive changes to the concerns. S106 is still outstanding regarding funding for 3G football pitch. It was considered too speculative by EHDC and so Watton Youth have submitted a letter confirming the details of this proposal. Cllr Hammon has compiled a detailed letter for where funds can be redirected towards the football pitch.

The Steering committee would like EHDC to fund an awning for the preschool and to redirect a footpath through the school car park so that it is open at all times. EHDC Planning Development Committee will be making the Planning decision on the Fairview submission on 19 June 2024.

Fairview Homes have suggested that the main road through the new development be named 'Emma Waltham Way' in honour of Cllr Emma Waltham who dedicated her time as Parish Councillor to ensuring the development benefits the community of Watton at Stone. Cllr Kirk will speak with Emma's family to seek their support.
Action: A. Kirk

Village fete

Cllr Lewis and Cllr Kirk will be helping on the stand.

Methodist Church

Cllr White has been contacted by Steve Watson, Property Director for the Methodist church to raise queries regarding Neighbour Plan naming the Methodist Church an asset of community. Cllr Hammon outlined the process for those in attendance.

Councillors agreed that all assets listed as ACV's in the Neighbourhood Plan would be registered. All enquiries regarding the Methodist Church should be referred to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Hammon will request that Charlie Clark continues to proceed with registration of other buildings in the village under Neighbourhood Plan

Action: C. Hammon

D-Day celebrations

Council agreed that no formal event will be organised by the Parish Council.

Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Cllr. Richardson reported on the following items.

Monthly accounts

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash – Payments
Payments		
Grassroots		£108.00
Google	Google workspace - direct debit	£14.47
Nicola White	Microsoft subscription	£59.99
Jane Allsop	Consultation fee	£600.00
NCD Ground Maintenance	Grass cutting	£120.00
Wages/Salaries	April 2024	£1377.91
		£2,280.37
Receipts		
EHDC	Precept	£23,082.50
		£23,082.50
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Tony Silvestri – Pavilion x 4	£45.00	
Payments		
British Gas	GAS	£196.15
HMRC	VAT	£62.23
East Herts Council	No.0001	£56.49
Parish News	Annual renewal of advert	£100.00
Caretaker Salary	Care taker duties	£285.00
		£699.87
Receipts		
Bounce	Main Hall - April	£160.87
Ildiko Imre-Karda	Meeting room	£28.00
Milebay Auditing Ltd	Pavilion & Kitchen hire - INV-24002	£90.00
Milebay Auditing Ltd	Pavilion & Kitchen hire - INV-24001	£90.00
Post Office	Cash deposit	£13.50
Post Office	Cash deposit	£45.00
Imagination Dance	Main Hall - hire	£216.00
Ms Price	Pavilion & Kitchen hire - INV-24004	£57.00
Post Office	Cash deposit	£13.50
Herts & Middlesex Ltd	Pavilion & Kitchen hire	£30.00
Post Office	Cash deposit	£13.50
Mrs Da Silva	Main hall, pavilion and kitchen hire	£57.00
Post Office	Cash deposit	£137.00
Ms Piggott	Pavilion & Kitchen hire	£40.00
		£991.37

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

Internal Audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

Helen McCash has completed the internal audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024. Parish Councillors approved payment of McCash & Hay invoice for £348. **Action: A. Brown**

Approval of the Annual Return of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

The partially completed AGAR form was e-mailed to Parish Councillors on 10 May.

The Parish Council went through the annual governance statement and the following questions were answered as listed below.

Section 1 – Annual governance statement	
We acknowledge as members of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 that,	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	Yes
2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Yes
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practice that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	Yes
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Yes
6. We have maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	Yes
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	Yes
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events, or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the authority and, where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.	Yes
9. Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee, we discharged our responsibility fund(s) assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit	N/A

Parish Councillors agreed that the Annual governance statement detailed in **Section One** (listed above) of the Annual Return, together with **Section Two**, the accounting statement 2023/2024, be approved and signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

The Clerk will e-mail the completed Annual Return and relevant documentation to PKF Littlejohn (official auditors) on or before Monday 1 July 2024. She will also advertise the public inspection dates, which are 10 June to 19 July 2024. **Action: A. Brown**

Audit of the Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

Community Hall year end accounts were not ready to review. They will be reviewed at next PC meeting

Cllr Lewis would like to meet with the Finance Team to gain clarity on budget and spend for the Community Hall. Clerk will arrange a meeting in July.

Action – A. Brown

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr Lewis reported on the following items.

- **CCTV**
CCTV is now working. A number of cages are damaged and may need replacing. A quote has been obtained and will be assessed and discussed in the next Trustee meeting.
- **Tennis club**
Meeting is being arranged
- **Football**
Meeting has been arranged with both Youth Football and Ladies Football.
- **Playground**
There are a number of repairs. Please refer to Caretakers report.
- **Future Mission of Community Hall**
This will be discussed in detail at the next Trustee meeting on Tuesday 21st May. Cllr Richardson suggested speaking with the school to see if they or the children have any ideas of what the future of the hall should be.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr Kirk reported on the following items:

Environmental Funding

There could be potential funding for environmental purposes for the village from EHDC. Cllr Brooks will speak to Ben Wood regarding application for funding following the email sent by Clerk. It was suggested that that funds could be used towards refurbishments of benches, orchard, Lammas steps etc. Cllr White requested that all Councillors submit ideas as to where they think the funds could be best spent.

Action: All

Gatekeeper ditch

Flooding frequently occurs in the ditch and across the road. Woodhall Estate are looking into this as it appears water is running off the field onto the road. Cllr White will follow up with Woodhall Estate.

Action: N. White

Allotment

Some plots are quite unkept. Cllr Kirk will be making contact with those who rent plots which are particularly unkept.

Action: A. Kirk

Benches

Scouts are booked for 15th July to refurbish the benches in the evening. Four volunteers are needed. Cllr Richardson, Cllr Kirk, Cllr Lewis volunteered their time. The Parish Council do need to provide a certain amount of equipment to the Scouts totalling approximately £235. It was agreed by all those in attendance that these costs were ok to pay. It was agreed the Cllr Brooks should apply for funding for this under Environmental Funding.

Action: M. Brooks

Traffic

Traffic in the high street between 8 & 9am is still parking on the single yellow line which reduces the flow of traffic. Cllr Thomas will contact EHDC to enquire about a Traffic Warden attending in those times to enforce the parking restrictions at these times.

Action: J. Thomas

Village Sign

Mike Smith has repaired the sign by completing the following:

- Waterproofed post base with expanding foam
- Created new concrete collar at base
- Re attached lead flashings to exposed shoulders
- Filled and re-sealed lower frame crosspiece
- Varnished carved sign with gloss Yacht Varnish as advised by Glyn Mould who made the sign

b) Routine Reports**i) Monthly village-report**

Cllr. White and Clerk completed the report on 8 May 2024 and reported on the main items highlighted in the monthly village-report. All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of her report.

- The playground surface is getting increasingly worse and will need reviewing
- The village sign has been repaired and is greatly improved

It was felt that there was more litter in the village. Cllr Thomas has requested again if a bin can be installed closer to the shop. A post will be put on Facebook to try and encourage people to pick up their litter in the village.

Action: N. White/ A. Brown

ii) Caretakers Report

Please refer to Caretakers Report

iii) Police reports

PCSO Sally Brooks e-mailed (3rd May 2024) the May Police report, which the Clerk then forwarded to all Parish Councillors.

Correspondence received

The Clerk reported that various correspondence had been received expressing interest in purchasing the Methodist Church. All were directed to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Village organisations

Scouts – The Scouts have been considering several alternative locations, with their preference being to remain in their current location and build a new scout hut.

Items for Publicity

Annual reports to go into Parish News and Facebook. The Clerk will create a poster for the fete.

Action – A. Brown

Meeting closed: 21.45

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is 11th June 2024.