

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 11th June 2003

Present:	Mr. N. Poulton (Chairman)	Mr. D. Stock (Vice-Chairman)
	Mr. C. Clark	
	Mrs. C. Dinnin	Mr. V. Dunhill
	Mr. D. Filer	Mr. I. Knight
	Mr. J. Meischke	Mr. M. Smith (after 1925)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. McCash.

2 Declaration of Interests

Mr. Smith has a prejudicial interest in item 6 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Litterbin for the Lammas.
Mr. Smith will therefore leave the meeting when the item is discussed.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

4 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held on 14th May 2003**
Mr. Meischke proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
Mr. Filer seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.
- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th May 2003**
The following amendments were made to the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 14th May 2003.
 - Page 10, Item 6 b, Sportsfield – Report
Under Allotments – Comments
‘OK – good season for rubbish!’
should read,
‘OK good season for rhubarb!’
 Mr. Meischke proposed that the minutes as amended be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Inform Mr. Poulton that ‘no left-turn onto the bypass’ should read ‘no right-turn’**
This action point has been completed.
- **Put Mr. Poulton’s 8-point e-mail to Ms. Valerie Weaver on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
- **Give Mr. Filer ‘Practitioners Guide to Governance and Accountability in Local Councils’ when received**
This action point has been completed.
- **Send Community Hall accounts to McCash and Hay for auditing**
This action point has not been completed due to a combination of the Clerk being unwell and McCash and Hay being away on holiday. The Clerk to take the books to McCash and Hay during the week commencing the 16th June. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Speak to Conservation Society about donation to the Parish Council to cover the price of the bin**
Mr. Stock said that the Conservation Society is happy to make a donation to the Parish Council to cover the price of a new litterbin.
Refer to item 6 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Litterbin for the Lammas (on page 9 of these minutes).
- **Write to two applicants who put their names forward for co-option**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to Rights of Way Officer at HCC re footpath adjacent to Bull public house**
This item to be discussed under 5 d, Specific Items - Footpath adjacent to Bull public house (on page 4 of these minutes).
- **Liase with Mr. Poulton and Mr. Stock re the type of trophies to be purchased**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to 5 f, Specific Items - Purchase of two Trophies (on page 5 of these minutes).

- **Write to Mr. Bond, Waggon and Horses, re use of the sportsfield on Sunday 20th July 2003**

This action point has been completed.

- **Read ‘Practitioners Guide to Governance & Accountability in Local Councils and inform Mr. Morrissey of the requirements for an internal audit**

Mr. Filer said that he had read the Practitioners Guide to Governance & Accountability in Local Councils and was disappointed that it contained no guidelines on how an internal audit should be performed. However, it did give full details on the requirements for the audit that we have done by Lubbock Fine.

Mr. Filer said that he would be visiting Mr. Morrissey tomorrow to discuss the requirements for the internal audit. He will ask Mr. Morrissey to contact both the Clerk and Mrs. McCash to define what is required.

Action: D. Filer

- **Return CDA membership forms**

This action point has been completed.

- **Obtain signature forms from Co-op Bank**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 6 a, Budget & Finance Sub-Committee - Change of Co-operative Bank signatories (on pages 6 and 7 of these minutes).

- **Pay additional cost of the ‘Working with your Council’ course**

This action point has been completed.

- **Purchase Charles Arnold Baker’s book on Local Council Administration**

This book is on order from the SLCC.

- **Contact Business Gas & TXU Energi re the supply of both gas and electricity to the Community Hall**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Budget & Finance Sub-Committee – Gas and Electricity supply (on page 6 of these minutes).

- **Write to RoSPA**

This action point has been completed.

- **Put in claim to Cornhill for damage to safety surface**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee – Safety- surface under small swings and see-saw (on page 7 of these minutes).

- **Contact Turners re shower system**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee – Showers (on page 7 of these minutes).

- **If there is no restriction in the casual-hire agreement, inform the Cricket Club that they can fit appropriate and approved stays on pavilion door**

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Dunhill had looked at the casual hire agreement and was satisfied that there was no restriction on having stays on the pavilion doors.

He said that Mr. Cled Fursland had made an excellent job of fitting stays to the top of the two pavilion doors that open onto the sportsfield.

It was agreed to write a letter of thanks to Cled Fursland.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Write to Mr. Stanley re installing byelaw signs**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write again to the Environment Agency asking for an urgent response re The Lammas trees before accepting Mr. Stanley’s quotation**

This action point has been completed.

Mr. Poulton reported that he had spoken to Ian Davies (our local Inspector at the Environment Agency) today and arranged a site meeting for 19th June to discuss the work that is required to the trees along the riverbank on the Lammas. Mr. Poulton and Mrs. Dinnin to attend the meeting and report to the Parish Council accordingly.

Action: N. Poulton/C. Dinnin

- **Arrange renewal of licences**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Renewal of licences (on page 9 of these minutes).

- **Ask Mr. Poulton to speak to the children about the removal of the broken pallets**

Mr. Poulton said that he did not ask the children to remove the broken pallets because he was not sure that they had put them there in the first instance. He had therefore cleared away the pallets and taken them to the refuse tip himself.

- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 59 Great Innings North**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 18 Lammas Road**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 1 Motts Close**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 121 High Street**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for Heath Mount School**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for The Coach House**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for Windrush**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for Blue Hill Farm, land and buildings at High Elms Lane**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for Land at Blue Hill Farm, High Elms Lane**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for Blue Bury Farm**
This action point has been completed.
- **Place HCC – re Airport expansion public hearing on 17th June 2003 on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to PC Ivens copying him with the Conservation Society’s letter re entrance to Hazeldell**
This action point has been completed.

Mr. Poulton said that the Clerk had spoken to PC Ivens, who informed her that the police were investigating the traffic problem at the entrance to Hazeldell.

PC Ivens said that it was his intention to give his report to the Parish Council at its meeting to be held on 10th September 2003.

- **Write to WAGN to ask that they revise the sign that points to the WAGN parking area**
This action point has been completed.
No response has been received to date.
The Clerk to chase. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Respond to Jacobs – River Beane Flood Study**
Mr. Knight said that he had given the Jacobs correspondence to Mike Freeman for a response. However, he had not yet heard from Mr. Freeman.
Mr. Knight to chase. **Action: I. Knight**

Mr. Smith arrived at the meeting.

- **Put HCC’s letter re the temporary closure of various roads on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write articles for Parish News**
This action point has been completed.

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Attend the PREP (Parishes for Rural Environmental Protection) meeting on 22nd April in Braughing**
Mr. Clark said that, unfortunately, he had not attended the PREP meeting because he had written the date of the meeting in his diary as 23rd and not 22nd April.

5 Specific Items

a) Appointments to Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee and other organisations

The following appointments were made:

- Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee Mr. M. Smith

- Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup Mr. M. Smith
The Clerk to notify the Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Allotment Holders Association**
It was agreed not to appoint a specific Parish Council representative to the Allotment Holders Association. Instead, the Parish Council will send one or more representatives to Allotment Holders Association meetings as and when required.
The Clerk to write to the Chairman of the Allotments Association accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Traffic-calming in Whempstead

Mr. Clark said that he was very disappointed with the lack of response from Hertfordshire Highways. He wrote to Ms. Valerie Weaver (Assistant District Manager, Hertfordshire Highways) on 17th December 2002 and had still not received a written response.

He said that he had recently spoken to Ms. Weaver concerning the traffic-calming issues in Whempstead. She informed him that Watton-at-Stone is only one of twenty parishes she deals with and that the Walkern Road flooding issue was, at the request of this Parish Council, her main priority for the parish.

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had had a site meeting with Ms. Weaver to discuss the flooding problem on the Walkern Road. But at no time had the Parish Council identified this item as its priority. Ms. Weaver had said during the meeting that she was going to write to all the parishes asking them to prioritise their needs.

Mr. Poulton said that he believed that a traffic survey had been done recently by Hertfordshire Highways, because he had seen the black recorder-cables going across the High Street.

It was agreed to write to County Councillor Bryan Hammond complaining about the lack of response on the Whempstead issue and copying him with Mr. Clark's letter of 17th December. **Action: C. Clark/J. Allsop**

Mr. Poulton agreed to find out the listing of priorities from Hertfordshire Highways. **Action: N. Poulton**

Mr. Poulton said that Hertfordshire Highways had done, or agreed to do, the following.

- Repair the safety barrier at the High Street/ Station Road roundabout.
- Resurface the footpaths in Hazeldell.
- Provided the land in is in their ownership, install a new grille on the Walkern Road gully.

This item to remain on the agenda **Agenda: 07/03**

c) Ornate village sign

Mrs. Dinnin said that Mr. Mould had faxed an updated version of one side of the ornate village sign to the Parish Council. However, it appears that the only change he made to the drawing was to include an additional duck (medium-sized). The large duck has not been removed and the roof of the Methodist Chapel has not been included in the design. Mrs. McCash has written again to Mr. Mould to ask him to change the drawings to include the roof of the Methodist Chapel and to make the larger duck much smaller.

This item to remain on the agenda under Specific Items. **Agenda: 07/03**

d) Footpath adjacent to Bull public house

Mr. Poulton said that Mrs. Smith (49 Rivershill) tripped on this footpath and badly bruised her eye and arm. Mrs. Smith notified Mr. Poulton in writing and he faxed her letter to Danny Kyan for a response. Repair work to the footpath has now been done by Hertfordshire Highways.

Mr. Poulton said that he was concerned about the Parish Council pursuing a claim for the land for the following reasons. Firstly, if someone was injured on the footpath whilst in the Parish Council ownership, the Parish Council could be liable for costs. Secondly, if we have the footpath registered in the name of the Parish Council and then apply to HCC to have the footpath dedicated, they may require us to bring the path up to a certain standard before accepting responsibility for this path. This could prove very costly.

Mr. Poulton said it was an important move forward that the Hertfordshire Highways had repaired the footpath, even though it has not been adopted by the HCC.

Mr. Stock said that it was agreed at the Parish Council meeting held on 14th May that we research this subject carefully and move slowly so that we did not fall into such traps.

It was agreed that the Parish Council write to Hertfordshire Highways stating that it has been brought to our attention that there has been an accident on the footpath adjacent to the Bull Public House and that they have recently done some repair works. Also, notifying them that, as far as the Parish Council is aware, the footpath is an unregistered piece of land and asking them if they would enter a claim for the land via the Land Registry, and then arrange for the footpath to be dedicated as a Right of Way. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

e) Walkern Road – flooding

Mr. Poulton said that the Clerk had chased Andrew Stevenson (Engineering Assistant at EHDC) about the installation of a new grille for the gully on the Walkern Road. Mr. Stevenson has been in contact with

Ms. Weaver (Hertfordshire Highways), who is deferring a decision about the grille until she has confirmed its ownership. She believes it is in the ownership of the Hertfordshire Highways, but has asked their property department to confirm this. A reply is expected by end of this week/beginning of next.

If Hertfordshire Highways does own the gully, Ms. Weaver would (in principal) be happy to fund the new grille.

It was agreed that this item should remain on the agenda until the matter is resolved.

Agenda: 07/03

f) Purchase of two Trophies

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had met with Mr. Poulton and Mr. Stock to determine the type of trophies to be purchased. She then showed Parish Councillors a picture of the 10½-inch cup they had selected. The price of each cup, with a marble stand (an additional £4/£5) and engraving is £47 plus VAT. Mrs. Dinnin said that a ‘keep-sake’ trophy would be an additional £7.

Mrs. Dinnin said that when the Parish Council first thought of presenting these trophies, it did not discuss the purchase of ‘keep-sake’ trophies; which would have to be budgeted for each year. After discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council would not purchase ‘keep-sake’ trophies because it burdened future Councils with an annual purchase.

The engraving on the trophy to be awarded to Year 6 child (aged 11 years) who, in the opinion of the staff, has been the "best" citizen during their whole time at the School, is to be:

- Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Good Citizenship Award

The engraving on the trophy to be awarded to a member of the Watton-at-Stone Scout and Guide Beaver or Rainbow group (ages 5 – 8 years), is to be:

- Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Outstanding Effort Award

Mr. Stock proposed that the Parish Council purchases the two trophies with engraving. Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mrs. Dinnin to purchase the trophies accordingly.

Action: C. Dinnin

The ‘Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Good Citizenship Award’ to be awarded at the Watton-at-Stone Primary School leavers’ service on 18th July in the Parish Church.

The ‘Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Outstanding Effort Award’ is to be awarded during the Community Service on 6th July 2003 at the sportsfield.

g) 2003 Hertfordshire Village of the Year competition

As reported in the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th May, Mrs. McCash has completed and submitted the application forms for entry to the 2003 Hertfordshire Village of the Year Competition.

Mr. Poulton said that he and Mrs. McCash will be meeting with the competition judges at the Community Hall on Friday 20th June at 1430.

The Village of the Year Awards will take place on 3rd July, at 1830 for 1900, in the Lea Room at County Hall in Hertford.

Mr. Poulton and Mrs. Dinnin agreed to attend the awards.

Action: N. Poulton/C. Dinnin

h) HCC - Hertfordshire Sustainable development Guide

This item has been on circulation.

Mr. Poulton said that because of the Parish Council’s policy to reply to consultation documents, he had drafted the following response.

‘Hertfordshire Sustainable Development Guide

Thank you for forwarding a copy of the above guide and allowing the Parish Council to comment.

Being a rural parish within the East Herts District Council area, the Parish Council noticed little reference to the rural make-up of Hertfordshire. An example of this is under SC4 - “Promoting Healthier Lifestyles” guideline 4, where it mentions leisure opportunities being promoted in town centres but no reference to the rural villages. This is a major issue in the villages where there is little or no public transport to the main towns for recreation and sports and again under SC5 - “Improving Access to Culture and the Arts”, guideline 1, and SC6 - “Making Travel and Access more Sustainable”, again no reference to the rural villages.

The council is pleased to note the engagement of local people with developers and the local planning authority for planning issues.

Could some reference be made under EV1 - “Enhancing Town Centres and Market Town Vitality” to villages under the five guidelines.

The Council welcomes section HE3.5 - “Dealing with the Resources More Sustainable”, the need to incorporate waste segregation and recycling facilities within new developments and the eight guidelines in HE6, protecting, providing and improving open spaces.

Under section HE7, it is noted that guideline 1 seeks new development on previously developed land. This is of particular importance in the villages where any new build must enhance the vitality of the rural area and not turn them, Hertfordshire villages, into dormitory towns.

The Parish Council would like our views taken into account in shaping the future type and form of development in Hertfordshire.’

Mr. Stock proposed that the above response be sent to Paul Donovan (Forward Planning Unit at HCC, County Hall, Hertford). Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour. **Action: J. Allsop**

i) Community Service on 6th July 2003

Mr. Poulton reminded Parish Councillors that the Community Service will take place on Sunday 6th July on the sportsfield and asked if as many Parish Councillors as possible could attend.

j) Recording of minutes

Mr. Meischke said that to avoid disputes about who said what etc., the Parish Council should purchase a tape recorder for use during its meetings. The tape for each meeting would be kept until the minutes of the meeting had been agreed and signed. This would also give the clerk extra back-up for her hand-written minutes on issues that require clarification.

Mr. Meischke proposed that a suitable recorder be purchased. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Meischke to contact a minimum of four Parish Councillors to approve the purchase of an appropriate tape-recording machine.

Action: J. Meischke

6 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items concerning the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

• **Gas and Electricity supply**

Mr. Filer said that the Clerk had obtained the cost of an electricity supply from British Gas and had verbally accepted a one-year contract with them. On receipt of the contract, we have a period of seven days during which we can change our mind.

Supplier	TXU Energi	British Gas
Standing charge per day	14.960p	8.730p
Charge for first 1500 units	6.470p	4.830p
Unit charge thereafter	5.180p	4.830p

The last TXU Energi bill was for £306.66. Based on the above figures British Gas would have billed us for £236.51.

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council change the supplier of the Community Hall electricity to British Gas. Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Change of Co-operative Bank signatories**

Mr. Filer said that because Mrs. Sarah Davies had stood down as a Parish Councillor and Mr. Michael Smith was subsequently co-opted, the signatures on all the Parish Council accounts need to be updated.

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council makes the following resolution enabling the update of signatures on all the Parish Council and Community Hall Trust accounts with the Co-operative Bank.

Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

1. The Co-operative Bank plc (“the Bank”) shall continue as our bankers.
2. The Bank shall be authorised to honour all cheques and all other documents made or accepted on our behalf even if such payment causes any accounts to be overdrawn or increase any existing overdraft, provided that such documents are signed in accordance with the specimen signatures shown in the Signature Verification Section.
3. The Bank shall be sent a copy of any future resolutions which affect the terms of the above resolutions.
4. The Bank shall be sent a copy of any changes in our Rules and Regulations or Byelaws.

5. The Bank shall be notified in writing of any change in Committee Members.
6. The Bank shall be notified in writing of any change of officials authorised to sign on our behalf.
7. The Bank shall otherwise continue to operate our accounts in accordance with the mandate.

The Clerk to obtain signatures from all current and outgoing Parish Councillors, and then return all completed documentation to the Co-operative Bank accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

The Co-operative Bank requires a signed copy of the minutes of this meeting, before any change of signatures can be accepted.

Community Hall Trustees

- **Report on and acceptance of minutes of meeting held on 20th May 2003**

- **Trustees Insurance**

Mr. Poulton said that Trustees liability indemnity insurance cover was discussed at the meeting.

The Trustees discussed this topic at length and raised concerns that, for example, if someone is injured and the insurance policy covering the Community Hall does not pay out, the Trustees could be held responsible. AON has quoted an annual premium of £157 to provide a maximum £250,000 liability cover. Mr. Poulton said that he had returned the completed Charity Trustees Indemnity Proposal Form to AON (he said that this did not commit us to purchase). A letter has also been sent to the Charities Commission of England and Wales asking for permission to purchase this insurance.

Mr. Filer said that he and Mr. Meischke had recently read through the Cornhill Insurance policies for both the Parish Council and the Community Hall, and he thought that it covered the Trustees liability.

The Clerk to contact Cornhill Insurance to clarify the situation.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Brackets in Main Hall**

Mr. Boddy has now installed wall-brackets in the Main Hall for use during his Jujitsu classes and Jim Keen's kick boxing classes. The Trustees are disappointed that the brackets had not been installed as requested and were not asymmetrical on the end wall. In addition, the holes had been drilled in the wall at the wrong height and then been covered over and painted with paint that did not match the colour of the wall. Mr. Poulton said that he had painted over the area with the remainder of the paint used to decorate the changing rooms and corridor. However, the paintwork is still not a perfect match with the rest of the walls.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **Safety- surface under small swings and see-saw**

At the Parish Council meeting held on 14th May, it was agreed that we submit a claim to Cornhill Insurance for the damage done to the safety surface under the small swings and see-saw.

Mr. Meischke said that he had contacted Wicksteed Leisure to ask them to submit a quotation for the repair of the damage. Wicksteed Leisure informed him that the repair work would require the same specification as the resurfacing quotation they submitted for £4406, plus VAT. The quotation included the removal of all safety-surface under the small swings and see-saw, and the installation of a new safety-surface, with concrete edging, which will be flush with the ground (i.e. the same style as that installed under the Rainbow multi-play and slide).

Wicksteed Leisure has now submitted an identical quotation (dated 6th June 2003), which will be submitted to Cornhill Insurance.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Showers**

Mr. Meischke said that he is meeting with Turners (who de-scaled the shower-system pipe-work earlier this year), on Monday 16th June, re the poor water pressure in the showers.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Sportsfield maintenance**

Mr. Knight said that the grass seeding of the goalmouths (the remaining item from the scheduled sportsfield maintenance-work programme) has now been done. It did not prove possible to do the top dressing.

- **Opening and closing of external toilets**

Parish Councillors agreed that they were very satisfied with Mr. and Mrs. Philips opening and closing of the external toilets.

At the Parish Council meeting held on 11th September 2002, it was agreed to review the opening and closing times of the toilets in June 2003. During that meeting, Mrs. Davies had asked why the toilets had remained closed throughout the summer holidays. She said that she and groups of mums had taken their children to the sportsfield for picnics during the summer and experienced difficulties with the small children not having the use of the toilet facilities. She was informed that the toilets are always kept

locked during school half term and holidays to avoid them being vandalised. This decision was made because the toilets were being regularly blocked and the walls covered with excrement etc. Mr. Meischke said that the Parish Council was unable to get anybody to clean the toilets when they were in such a condition. In addition to this, the toilets, washbasins and hand-dryers were vandalised, and wet toilet-paper was regularly thrown about in the areas surrounding the Community Hall.

After discussion by Parish Councillors, it was agreed that, sadly, the opening and closing times of the toilets shall remain the same as now (i.e. 0900 to 1515, Monday to Friday, during term-time only).

- **Summer Play Scheme/ Jujitsu**

The Summer Play Scheme will be held in the Community Hall from Monday 28th July until Friday 22nd August (weekdays only).

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Boddy had requested the Community Hall facilities during this period and would be happy to hire the Main Hall and changing room area only (instead of his usual booking of the Main Hall and Pavilion). Mr. Meischke asked Parish Councillors if they had any problems with Mr. Boddy using the Community Hall at the same time as the Summer Play Scheme.

After discussion, it was agreed that because the Summer Play Scheme does not use the Main Hall, Mr. Boddy could hire it.

Mr. Meischke to notify Mr. Boddy accordingly.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Sports field Gate Post**

Mr. Poulton thanked Mr. Smith for repairing the gate post, which he did free of charge.

- **Allotments maintenance**

Mr. Meischke said that growth by the stile needs cutting back. Mr. Meischke to contact Mr. Welch to ask him to do the work. Mr. Meischke is also to speak to Mr. Welch about the strimming and grass cutting work he does for the Parish Council, some of which is not being done correctly. **Action: J. Meischke**

- **Tennis Courts**

Before the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of a letter, dated 4th June, from Ian Knight (as Chairman of the Watton-at-Stone Tennis Club) which outlined a proposal to build a new tennis court adjacent to the MPPA.

Mr. Knight said that the Tennis Club would like to build an additional court behind the MPPA, together with a practise wall and a storage shed. This would require a small area of land owned by the St. Albans Diocesan Board. The land, which is in a very poor condition and full of scrub, forms part of the field that is currently leased to a resident of Watton-at-Stone for the purpose of grazing horses. Mr. Knight said that it would be beneficial to the Tennis Club if the Parish Council could make the initial contact with the St. Albans Diocesan Board to see whether or not it would be prepared to allow the project to proceed. The Tennis Club would raise all the funds required for the project. They would then like to donate the new facility to the Parish Council, which would be available for public use (subject to priority playing-times allocated to the tennis Club, e.g. as now on the MPPA). However, the additional court would be for tennis only and not for other sports (e.g. netball and football practise). Mr. Poulton asked if the new facility would be floodlit. Mr. Knight said that it was not their initial intention to do so.

Parish Councillors discussed the Tennis Club's proposals at length. Mr. Meischke suggested that the disused part of the allotments could be an alternative site. Mr. Dunhill said that he believed that the allotments site had a covenant on the land stating that no buildings can be erected.

It was agreed that Mr. Knight write to the St. Albans Diocesan Board informing them of the requirements for the additional tennis facilities and identifying both the horses' field and allotment land as possible sites. Mr. Knight to seek the approval of the other Community Hall Trustees before the letter is sent.

Action: I. Knight

Environment

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Byelaws notices for Watton Green and the Lammas**

Michael Stanley has still not erected the two notices.

The Clerk to chase.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Lammas trees and tree debris**

This item was discussed under 4 b, Review of Actions - Write again to the Environment Agency asking for an urgent response re The Lammas trees before accepting Mr. Stanley's quotation (on page 2 of these minutes).

- **Litterbin for the Lammas**

Mr. Smith left the meeting while this item was discussed.

Mr. Poulton said that a litterbin had been purchased (from Glasdon UK) of the same style as used in the village. He said that during a discussion with EHDC re the emptying of the bin, they offered to provide a very large, ground anchored, bin free of charge to the Parish Council. Mr. Poulton then showed the new bin to Parish Councillors. EHDC is also willing to empty the new bin, which is to be located by the new bike-ramp site on the Lammas.

Mr. Stock said that the Conservation Society is happy for the Parish Council to use the bin that they donated as and when required.

Two verbal quotations have been received for the installation of the large bin.

- Michael Stanley - £70
- Michael Smith - £40

Mr. Meischke proposed that the Parish Council ask Mr. Smith to install the bin. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour. **Action: M. Smith**

Mr Smith returned to the meeting.

Mrs. Dinnin said that the grass in front of the bench-seat at the Mill Lane end of the Lammas has been flattened (presumably by cyclists). Mr. Poulton to investigate with Mrs. Dinnin.

Action: N. Poulton/C. Dinnin

Mr. Meischke said that he had received positive comments from residents in the High Street (whose gardens back onto the Lammas) about the bike-ramp area.

Mr. Poulton said that EMM Décor (whose business is in Mill Lane, adjacent to the Lammas) had also been complimentary about the area and the general behaviour of the youngsters.

- **Grass cutting - Lammas and Watton Green**

Mr. Stanley will do the grass-cutting work on the Lammas and Watton Green later this week or early next week.

- **Renewal of licences**

Mr. Stock said that all the licences for Mr. R. Adams, of 4 Glebe Close, had been signed.

Mrs. Dinnin said that Mr. Steve Alsford (of 24 Redvers Close, Bishop's Stortford) and Mr. S. D. Winser (of 16 Tanners Way, Hunsdon, Nr. Ware) had not yet signed and returned their licenses.

Mr. Filer agreed to chase Mr. Winser.

Action: D. Filer

- **Common Land adjacent to the Crowbury**

Mr. Filer said that he had received a complaint from Mrs Hammond, about Mr. Frank Warren, who had been digging on Common Land outside his property. We recognise that this was probably a drainage channel, but he should have asked our permission first.

It was agreed to write to Mr. Warren referring to this incident and asking him to seek permission from the Parish Council before doing such work in the future..

Action: D. Filer/J. Allsop

- **Cleaning of the War Memorial**

This item was raised by Mr. Stock.

S. C. Dass will be starting work on the War Memorial within the next two weeks.

Mr. Knight confirmed that the Parish Church would allow Mr. Dass to obtain water, via a hose, from the Churchyard.

b) Sportsfield

i) Report

Mr. Clark carried-out the sportsfield report on the 8th June 2003, the result of which is as follows.

- **Sportsfield:**

Condition of grass	Recently cut.
Litter	None.
Dog fouling	In use – no fouling.
Netball posts	OK.
General	Very good.

- **Children's Playground:**

Condition of surface	Good apart from damage by baby swings, needs immediate attention.
Litter/Litterbin	In use.
Large swings	OK.
Small swings	Seats in poor condition, frame needs painting.
See-Saw	OK - squeaking, some rusting.
Rainbow multi-play and slide	OK.

Two spring sit-on	OK.
Teen shelter	OK.
General	Good.
• Bike ramps area:	
Junior Jump	}
Double Ramp	} No evidence of use.
Fun Box	}
General	Litterbin leaning at angle.
• Community Hall:	
General Condition (Exterior)	Windows need cleaning and car park doors need painting.
Litterbin	Used.
Car Park	OK.
General	OK.
• Multi-Purpose Play Area:	
Surface	Good.
Boundary Fencing	OK – 3 loose cross-bars, interior boards need staining.
Tennis nets	OK.
Litter	A little.
General	Area around MPPA needs strimming.
• Great Innings Play Area:	
Equipment	OK.
Surfaces	OK.
Litter	OK.
Dog fouling	None.
Comments	Very tidy. Fencing and gaiting good.
• Allotments Area:	
Access	Good.
Condition of paths between Allotments	Good.
Condition of Allotments under cultivation	Good.
Condition of Allotments not under cultivation	Overgrown.
Litter	None.
Comments	Generally tidy, some dog fouling.
• Culverts on Mill Lane	
Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts	Lots of rubbish around bike ramps. May need a litterbin.
Dog-fouling	OK.
Comments	Old wheelbarrows and rubbish around seat.
• Salt bins	
Perrywood Lane	Full.
Entrance to Great Innings	¾ full.
Great Innings South – outside number 93	Full.
Station Road	Full.
Moorymead Close	Full.
Hazeldell	Full.
• Dog-waste bins	
Footpath 17	In use – full.
Sportsfield	In use.
Church Walk	In use – nearly full.
Walkern Road	Empty.
Station Road	In use, nearly full.
High Street (by Memorial)	In use, no lid.
Great Innings	Empty.
Mill Lane	Empty.
• General Comments	-
• Small swings	
Mr. Poulton to look at the condition of the small swings (i.e. seats, paintwork and squeaking parts).	

Action: N. Poulton

- **Exterior woodwork on Community Hall**

It was agreed to obtain quotations for the staining of all of the exterior woodwork at the Community Hall (excluding the high-level windows of the Main Hall) from Mick Taylor and one other contractor.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Three loose cross-bars on MPPA fence**

Mr. Meischke to inspect the three loose cross-bars on the MPPA fence.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Kicker-boards at MPPA**

Obtain quotations for the staining of the kicker boards from Tim Clark and Mick Taylor.

Action: C. Clark/J. Allsop

- **Strimming around MPPA**

Sodexo have scheduled the strimming of the grass around the MPPA and sportsfield for Saturday 14th June.

- **Two wheelbarrows on Lammas**

Mr. Clark said that there were two rusty wheelbarrows, without wheels, near the bike-ramp area on the Lammas.

Mr. Smith agreed to remove the wheelbarrows from the site.

Action: M. Smith

ii) Weekly report and action

The weekly reports done by Mr. Poulton highlighted defects on the Play Area, which were then reported to Mr. Meischke.

Mr. Poulton said that the weekly inspection takes him about an hour to complete each Sunday and in his opinion was an unnecessary task. If there are any problems on the sportsfield, Ted Brown (who does the litterpicking in this area) always notifies him.

At the Parish Council meeting held on 10th April 2002, it is minuted that:

‘Mr. Poulton said that a letter had been received from RoSPA suggesting that it is in the best interests of the Parish Council to carry-out weekly checks on all their play equipment. However, these checks are very superficial and do not require any technical knowledge.

Mr. Meischke is in contact with RoSPA on the subject and will report back to the Parish Council during a future meeting.’

Parish Councillors agreed that although there is a necessity for a weekly inspection, there is no need to record the results in such detail.

Mr. Poulton proposed that Ted Brown be asked to do a weekly visual-inspection of the sportsfield and report any problems to Mr. Poulton or Mr. Meischke. Mr. Brown to be paid £5.50 per week to do the inspection (i.e. one hours work). Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Poulton to show Mr. Brown what is required.

Action: N. Poulton

The Clerk will record all defects found during Mr. Brown’s inspection, in a record file/booklet.

7 Planning

a) Applications

i) 1 Hazeldell

2-storey side extension

Parish Councillors looked at the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

i) 76 Hazeldell

Single storey rear conservatory

- EHDC – permission granted

ii) The Coach House

2-storey and single storey rear extension

- EHDC – permission granted

Mr. Poulton said that he had asked the Clerk to obtain a planning extension for this application, to enable Parish Councillors to discuss it during their meeting on 14th May. The Clerk said that she spoke to the planning officer who agreed that the Parish Council could make their written response directly after its meeting. The Parish Council’s response was sent to EHDC on 15th May. However, EHDC had already granted permission for this application on 13th May and claimed that they did not receive the Parish Council’s response until two weeks later.

Mr. Poulton said that there was nothing the Parish Council could do to change the planning decision. However, he proposed that the following letter be sent (by the Clerk) to Mr. Rossington, Assistant Director, Development Control at EHDC’s Planning Department.

‘Watton at Stone Parish Council has received the granted planning permission for the above development but is very concerned that the right course of action has not been followed and has asked me to respond.

On receipt of the planning application dated 28th April, I telephoned your department, at the request of my Chairman, asking for an extension on the consultation period. The reason for this being that Watton at Stone Parish Council were not meeting until the 14th May, the day after the end of the consultation period.

I also realised that this planning application was contentious following a similar application having been submitted on this site previously.

The Parish Council at its meeting on the 14th May strongly objected to these plans, copy of our objection letter attached.

The Council is very concerned to learn that the planning permission was granted on the 13th May, which means that our objection letter was not taken into account and our request for an extension was denied, even though it had previously been agreed with the planning officer.

As your department is aware, this application falls within the Conservation Area of the village and part of this application is to remove a hundred year old yew tree.

As there were numerous objections to this planning application and the application was in the Conservation Area why was this not referred to the planning committee for a decision?

Watton at Stone Parish Council is very concerned that the proper procedure has not been followed and our comments on this application have been ignored.

I await your comments.’

Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Action: J. Allsop

iii) 59 Great Innings North

Attached garage at side - EHDC – permission refused

Mr. Poulton read out the reasons for refusal as follows.

‘The proposal would give rise to additional traffic hazards by reason of the proximity of the proposed access to the junction of Great Innings North and would thereby be prejudicial to highway safety and a potential danger to other road users.’

iv) Dairy Cottage, Home Farm, Woodhall Park

Change of use of dwelling to B1 use as an estate office - EHDC – permission granted

v) Watton Nursery, Ware Road

Polythene tunnel - EHDC – permission granted

c) Appeal Decisions

i) 119 High Street

Change of use from shop to food and drink (takeaway) - Planning Inspectorate - Appeal dismissed

8 Correspondence received

a) Hertfordshire Highways – Hazeldell footpaths

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter from Ms. Valerie Weaver (Assistant District Manger – Hertfordshire Highways) dated 13th May.

‘I refer to your letter dated 4th March 2003 regarding the above matter.

I wish to confirm that Hazeldell is included in the Intergraded Works Programme (IWP) for 2003 – 2004.

I am currently producing a Commission Brief to our consultants Mouchel to undertake this long-term structural maintenance scheme.

As soon as the programme for undertaking all of this financial years IWP is produced, information will be made available to your Parish Council and Local Members.

I hope this suitably clarifies the present situation.’

b) HCC – Hazeldell – entrance markings

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter from Ms. Valerie Weaver (Assistant District Manger – Hertfordshire Highways) dated 19th May.

‘I have received the attached letter from Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society requesting yellow lines at Hazeldell.

As you are aware, this Authority is reluctant to increase the amount of waiting restrictions in rural villages unless there is specific traffic problems that can only be addressed by such markings.

I am not aware of any problems, and would welcome your comments on this matter.'

He then read out Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society's letter dated 28th March.

'Road Markings at the entrance to Hazeldell, Watton-at-Stone

The present road markings are a white line with a "keep clear" message. We have been informed by the police that they have no legal authority, but that they can take action if an obstruction occurs.

We are wondering about pursuing yellow lines in this area.

Could you please advise us in regard to procedure.'

Mr. Stock said that had had already advised the Conservation Society not to pursue the double yellow-line option and told them why. He therefore proposed that the Parish Council writes to Ms. Weaver to inform her that the Parish Council does not support the Conservation Society's suggestion. Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour. **Action: D. Stock**

Note: Mr. Stock sent the following letter to Ms. Weaver on 17th June 2003.

'Subject: Entrance Markings to Hazeldell, your letter (ref E/VMV//20/46)

The Parish Council does not support the idea of double yellow-lines, as suggested by the Conservation Society. I have informed the society of the reasons for this view.

However, we are aware of the problem of bad parking in part of the entrance to Hazeldell which does give rise to some serious safety-issues on the right-hand bend into the estate.

The existing 'Keep Clear' markings were laid in an attempt to ease the problem. Sadly, these markings are totally ignored by many people. Sometimes a car is parked on the marking when no other cars are parked in the area at all; which seems to demonstrate an attitude problem.

We have asked the Police to advise us on the situation, and we ask for your help too.'

c) Oliver Heald – Home to School Transport Policy

Mr. Poulton read out a letter drafted by Sarah Davies, who is acting on behalf of the Parish Council on this issue. Mr. Filer agreed to edit the letter. The following letter was sent to Oliver Heald on 17th June.

'Home to School Transport Policy

Thank you for your letter dated 22nd May 2003, which included the rather disappointing, evasive and unsatisfactory reply from Roy Shostak.

We have read the letter and would like to respond thus:

1. Mr. Shostak refers to the 'public consultation' meetings held in January and February 2002, these must have been very lonely affairs as no parent in the area attended or even knew about such meetings, or what they were about. Thus, the consultation was a failure. Parents were still blissfully unaware of the current situation when they received their school allocations this year, and due to the rather unsatisfactory way it was explained in the booklet, it took further clarification by us with the Student Services team to get to the bottom of what the new policy meant and how it would affect our village. It was then the Parish Council that alerted parents to the situation.
2. Yet again, Mr. Shostak compares our village community with those living in towns, failing to acknowledge that those living in towns have a greater choice of schools as they can easily walk to a wider range of schools, whereas our children cannot. This is what is unfair. In fact it is blatant discrimination against rural communities.
3. As for 'spare seats', there are no such seats available at a reduced rate!
4. The policy still does not stand up to close scrutiny and even Mr. Shostak seems doubtful about it judging by the very poor reply. This is not a cost saving exercise as we have already proved. It is about filling one particular school which has had poor results over the years and they want to try and improve it by ensuring the intake includes the rural communities. This would both fill the school and improve the results. Thus parental choice has been removed and children in our village are being pressurised into one particular school (unless of course they are prepared to pay £2.60 per day, if there are 'spare seats'). Where is the choice in this policy?
5. Desperate parents who refuse to allow this to happen to their children will be forced to go on the 'school run' something that we thought we were trying to discourage. This policy will have the exact opposite effect and will put more traffic on our roads.
6. We can now confirm that several families have indeed now left the village due to this wrong policy, what we feared would happen, is happening. Are we to just stand by and let them destroy our community?

We stress once again the implications of this policy to our village are devastating. It is outright discrimination against rural communities.

Still Mr. Shostak fails to answer or justify, is this because he knows it is wrong?

May we take this opportunity to thank you once again for your continuing help and support in this important matter.'

The letter was typed on Parish Council notepaper, signed by Mrs. Davies, with the following statement.

'Sarah Davies (former Parish Councillor) is acting for and on behalf of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.

Signed: 'Jane Allsop, Clerk to the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council'

d) EHDC – Invitation to a Summer Conference on 8th July 2003

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke agreed to represent the Parish Council at the EHDC's Summer Conference on 8th July 2003.

The Clerk to notify EHDC accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Poulton said that if any other Parish Councillors wanted to attend, they need to contact the Clerk as soon as possible.

e) Tennis Club - Additional Tennis Court and other facilities

This item was discussed under 6 a, Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee - Tennis Courts (on page 8 of these minutes).

f) Ms. Byrne re maintenance work at Watton Station

Mr. Poulton said that he had received an e-mail from Mrs Byrne, of 30 Moorymead Close, about engineering works being done by WAGN at Watton station. WAGN had informed residents of Moorymead Close that the work would take about a week to complete. However, the work, which is being done at weekends and after 2100 in the week, has already taken over two weeks and is still not complete.

Mrs. Byrne states that the noise of the machinery is severely disrupting the sleep of the residents of Moorymead Close, many of whom have young families. The feeling from residents is that the noise and length of time to undertake the work is totally unacceptable. This work should now be done during the day when only one train per hour is scheduled to stop at Watton station. WAGN should appreciate the needs of the public and realise that sleep disruption night-after-night is very distressing.

Mr. Poulton said that a letter had been sent to WAGN asking them to tell us how much longer the work at Watton station is likely to take and what they are going to do to alleviate the noise problem.

This item to be placed on the agenda for next month for review.

Agenda: 07/03

9 Reports from other Organisations

• Watton-at-Stone Primary School

- Mr. Clark reported that a new Deputy Headteacher, Mr. Dominic Long, had been appointed and will join the school in September 2003.
- The annual parents meeting will be held 11th July at 0900.
- The school would like to set-up a Breakfast Club during term-time, from 0715 to 0915. The caretaker would open up the building each morning and the school cook would produce healthy-style breakfasts. However, in spite of advertising in the Mercury, a leader has not been yet been identified or appointed. The Headteacher, Mrs. Mannall, would like the Parish Council's support and has asked if it would place a notice in the Parish News to ask for any interested persons to contact the school directly. The school would pay the Breakfast Club Leader £6.50 per hour (i.e. £13 per session). Parish Councillors agreed to support the school and place a notice in the Parish News as requested (see item 10 below).

10 Items for Parish News

Articles on the following items discussed by the Parish Council to be sent to the editor of the Parish News for inclusion in the next issue.

- Purchase of two trophies to be presented to the Scout and Guide Group and Watton-at-Stone Primary School.
- School seeks leader for their breakfast club.
- Home to school transport policy.

Mr. Filer agreed to write the articles accordingly.

Action: D. Filer

11 Accounts/Correspondence

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council
Petty Cash

Receipts

None

Payments

None

Cheques required

J. Allsop	For SLCC 'working with your council' course	40.00
SLCC	C. A. Baker's book on Local Council Administration	38.50
Ted Brown	16 hours litterpick	93.50
Adam Welch	Grass cutting and strimming work – April 2003	129.17
J. Allsop	Stamps	27.00
Community Hall	Annual grant	5632.00
Fred Burnell	Mole control	111.63
Glasdon UK	1 litterbin	52.44
CDA for Hertfordshire	Annual subscription	52.00
J. Allsop	June salary	505.25
Watton PCC	Delivery of Parish Report	10.00
J. Allsop	NTL phone charges to 03.06.03	<u>25.50</u>
		<u>6689.99</u>

Cheques received

None

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Mr. Keen – Main Hall	80.00
Mrs. Liz Cullip – Pavilion hire	63.00
Dave Boddy – Parish room	14.00
Ms. Shippin - Pavilion	28.00
Floodlighting to 20.05.03	<u>60.00</u>
	<u>245.00</u>

Payments

John Philips -	20.00
C. Bewley – 40.5 hrs @ 5.50	<u>222.75</u>
	<u>242.75</u>

Cheques required

M. Taylor	Decorating shower rooms and corridor	350.00
Christine Bewley	10.5 hours	<u>57.75</u>
		<u>407.75</u>

Cheques received

EHDC	Pavilion hire for elections	98.00
Georgie Pay	Main Hall	24.00
Gill Gilbey	Main Hall	<u>45.00</u>
		<u>167.00</u>

Mr. Filer proposed that accounts be paid, Mr. Dunhill seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- **The meeting closed at 2122.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 9th July 2003.**