

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 8th March 2006

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

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr. Filer.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Declaration of Interests

Mr. Smith declared a pecuniary interest in item 8 a, Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee – Sportsfield Maintenance (on page 4 of these minutes).

4 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

• Neighbourhood -Watch meeting

Mr. Poulton reminded Parish Councillors that the public Neighbourhood-Watch meeting arranged by the Hertfordshire Constabulary is on 16th March 2006 at 1930 in the Memorial Hall. Mr. Poulton is unable to attend himself, because he will be away on holiday, and asked if as many Parish Councillors as possible could be present.

• New Watton-Place-Clinic signs

Mrs. McCash was contacted by several residents this morning about the new Watton Place Clinic signs, which they felt were 'brash' and out of keeping with the area. She agreed with this and said that the replacement signs were supposed to be replaced like-for-like (i.e. wood) whereas the new ones are made of plastic. Mr. Raj Chauhan (the dentist at Watton Place Clinic) telephone Mr. Poulton and asked for the Parish Council's opinion on the matter. In response to a request from Mr. Poulton, Mr. Stock inspected the signs and felt that they made it easier for patients to find the entrance to the clinic car park. He also said that the general appearance of the signs was no different to others in the 'commercial area' of the High Street. It was agreed that Raj Chauhan be informed that the Parish Council has no comments to make about the signs (which are on private property).

Mrs. McCash agreed to speak and write to Raj Chauhan accordingly.

Action: H. McCash

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

• Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th March 2006

Mr. Stock proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

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

b) Review of actions

- Send all Parish Councillors a copy of Mr. Goutam's e-mail re highway fault-repair service:** Completed.

- Sign Sunday footballers Key-Holder Agreement:** Completed.

- Instruct Chas Lowe to deliver gravel to the War Memorial site:** Completed.
Mr. Monk has spread the gravel around the War Memorial site.

- Notify Parish-News Editor of any meeting dates that fall on or close to the publishing deadline**
The Clerk to do so as appropriate.

- Send Village Directory amendments to the Clerk:** Completed.

- Ask all organisations in the Village Directory to check that their current details are correct**
This action point is on-going.

- Contact Business Gas re missing contract**

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter dated 23rd February to Adrian Harvey (Director, Commercial Customers, Business Renewals Team).

'The Community Hall Trustees acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 2nd February 2006.

However, on 27th July 2005 the Community Hall Trustees accepted your offer of a three year contract for our gas and electricity (please see attached e-mails). Since that date the Community Hall Trustees have contacted Vilpa Lillie on numerous occasions asking her to supply the contracts for both gas and

electricity. Finally in December 2005 the electricity contract arrived, however the gas was not forthcoming.

The Community Hall Trustees e-mailed her again in January 2006, however received no response. On 2nd February I telephoned British Gas re our new direct debit mandate and asked when the Community Hall Trustees could expect the gas contract to arrive. The person I spoke to assured me the contract would be with us within 7 days. To date the contract has not been received.

Could you please forward us, by return of post, the three year contract which the Community Hall Trustees accepted on 23rd July 2005.'

No response has been received to date. It was agreed to write again in two weeks asking for a response to our letter. If no response is forthcoming by the next Parish Council meeting (12th April 2006), then the Community Hall Trustees will have no alternative but to contact the ombudsman. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Give Mrs. Dinnin a copy of the Cottage Site lease agreement:** Completed.
- **Contact the Clerk re 2006 East Herts Rural Conference:** Completed.
Mr. Poulton was the only Watton-at-Stone Parish Councillor to attend the conference.
- **Draft a letter re Mill Lane planning application:** Completed and cancelled.
Refer to item 6 a, Planning Applications – 1-3 Mill Lane (on page 2 of these minutes).
- **Write article for Parish News:** Completed.
- **Speak to Michael Jackson about anti-virus software for the Parish Council computer:** Completed.

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

None.

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) 1-3 Mill Lane

Demolition of existing building and erection of 7 residential dwellings in a part 2/part 3 storey structure
Parish Councillors looked at the plans and after lengthy discussion agreed to write to East Herts Council informing them that the Parish Council strongly objects to this application for the following reasons.

1. The number of parking spaces shown on the plans is not sufficient for the dwellings proposed.
2. The proposed development is not in keeping with the surrounding area and would be more at home in an urban environment. It is not suited to this rural location and in particular would have a detrimental affect on the adjacent area of high-value common land (i.e. The Lammas).
3. The proposed development, which appears to be 50% higher than the existing industrial units, is an overpowering structure which is an over-development of the site and not sympathetic to its surroundings.
4. We are concerned about this proposed change of use and subsequent loss of industrial/commercial units (and thus job opportunities) within the village.
5. We are also concerned about whether or not the two bridges in Mill Lane are strong enough to take the load of heavy construction-vehicles.

Action: D. Stock/J. Allsop

During the Parish Council meeting held on 8th February it was agreed that Mr. Knight should draft letter to the planning department in support of a section 106 in favour of the Watton Football Development Centre fund. However, following the following subsequent consultations between Parish Councillors (via e-mail and telephone) it was agreed that the letter not be sent. Instead, the following letter has now been sent to the Sports and Social Club.

'Thank you for your letter ref: planning gain for football.

This is excellent news for the future proposed development of the football pitches.

Please note it is the policy of the Parish Council not to comment on a planning application until councillors have seen the plans.

I can confirm that the plans have now been received and that they will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting on the 9th March.

However I would inform you that a donation or contribution could not be made as a condition of a section 106 Agreement.

It was agreed at the last Parish Council meeting, that we would inform East Herts Planning department of our interest in securing a gain, for development of the football pitch.'

Mr. Poulton has been in communication with Simon Drinkwater (District Councillor Solicitor) about the Parish Council's position regarding this planning gain for Mill Lane. He advised us that we should only write to the planning department if the Parish Council is happy with the plans submitted. In which case, the suggested wording of the letter is as follows.

'The Parish Council recognises that there is a need for improved sporting facilities within the village and would ask that consideration is given to supporting these facilities.'

The Clerk suggested that the Sports and Social Club should meet the owners of 1 -3 Mill Lane and ask them to put in writing their intent to make a substantial contribution (of the order of £30,000) towards the cost of the Watton Football Development Centre, if planning consent is agreed.

Mr. Knight to inform the Sports and Social Club accordingly.

Action: I. Knight

Once again, it was made clear that the Parish Council does support the Sports and Social Club's plans for a Watton Football Development Centre.

ii) Tinkers Corner, Whempstead

Single storey side extension

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

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

None.

7 Specific items

a) Lammas Road street lighting

Mr. Poulton was pleased to report that East Herts Council have approved our grant application of £1,000 towards the Lammas Road street lighting. Hertfordshire Highways has also agreed a grant of £7000 from its 06/07 JMP discretionary budget.

Mr. Poulton to keep the Parish Council updated as to when the work will be done.

Agenda: 04/06

b) Update of Village Directory

The Clerk is in the process of contacting all organisations.

It was agreed that the Clerk can use the Watton-at-Stone Parochial Church Council's photocopy machine to copy the Village Directory.

The cost of photocopying (including paper) is 3p per double-sided sheet, plus £10 for delivering the directory throughout the village.

c) Great Innings play area

Mr. Poulton was pleased to report that the improvements to the Great Innings play area have been approved. The work is already underway and should be completed before the end of the March.

It was agreed to ask Sodexho Land Technology to dispose of our mini-goal-post, which they have had in storage since May 2005.

Action: N. Poulton

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

In the absence of Mr. Filer, Mr. Poulton reported on the following item concerning the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Community Hall bank accounts**

As instructed during the Parish Council meeting held on 11th January 2006, the Clerk sent Alliance and Leicester the transfer-forms to close the Community Hall Co-operative Bank accounts. However, the forms appear to have been lost in the post because they have no record of receiving them.

To enable the accounts to be closed by the end of the financial year (i.e. 31st March 2006), it was agreed to write to the Co-operative Bank asking them to close the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall 14-day and current accounts and forward us a cheque accordingly.

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Filer to sign the letter authorising the transaction. **Action: J. Meischke/D. Filer**

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Poulton reported on the following items concerning the Community Hall Trustees.

- **Roof**

The contractor who last repaired the Community Hall is to inspect and repair the roof and clear debris from the top guttering.

- **Damage to wall, footpath and drain**

Mr. Meischke has obtained two verbal quotations for the repair of the wall, footpath and sunken drain. One is for £150 plus materials and the other is for £100 including materials.

Mr. Meischke to accept the £100 quotation.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Meeting with Wicksteed Leisure Limited**

Mr. Meischke met with Wicksteed Leisure regarding repair work on the sportsfield play area. They have submitted their quotation of £745, plus VAT, for the following work.

Two bay/four seat swing

4	AL10 twist link swing chain for flat rubber seats	£168
8	C10 Oilite bush 7/8" long	£8
8	Small shackle, bolt and pin	£20

Seesaw

1	Non-bump mechanism rebuild kit	£180
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Maintenance

	Labour cost to install the above spares, to lubricate the bearing on the swing frame, and pull through 2 no. links on the chains	£337.50
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Mrs. McCash proposed that we accept Wicksteed Leisure's quotation. Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion and all present were in favour. The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Recreation & Amenities

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

- **Sportsfield Maintenance**

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

Mr. Knight said that Blue Bury Contractors will be weed-killing, fertilising and re-seeding the sportsfield for the Sports and Social Club during the 3rd week of April (i.e. between the end of Football and the beginning of Cricket). The cost of the work is estimated to be £1200. The Parish Council will pay 1/3rd of this.

Mr. Smith returned to the meeting.

- **MPPA**

There is an outbreak of moss and algae on the MPPA. Because there is no money available in the 2005/06 budget for additional work on the MPPA, the Tennis Club will pay for the work to be done.

Mr. Poulton suggested that Mr. Knight contact Claire Pullen (East Herts Council) because some finance towards the cost of the moss and algae kill may be available.

Action: I. Knight

The drainage channel around the perimeter of the MPPA is full of leaves. It was agreed to ask Ted Brown to remove the leaves.

Action: J. Meischke

Skateboarding is occurring again on the MPPA, although no damage is yet apparent.

- **Boot-bath/scrapper**

Mr. Bunyan has provided a verbal quotation of £150 to install an outside tap, regardless of location. The cost of a drain with mud collector by the garden wall would be £350.

- **Additional Tennis Court**

This item is progressing slowly.

- **Wire fence in the sportsfield hedge**

The hazardous post in the wire fence has been removed.

Environment

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

- **Lammas river bank**

The Clerk received an anonymous phone from a resident of Watton-at-Stone who said that while she was walking her dog on the Lammas a man had shouted at her to keep off the river bank opposite his property. She noted that some bulbs and shrubs had been planted on this section of the Lammas bank.

Mrs. Dinnin said she visited the site and found that a neat row of daffodils had been planted, plus some rose bushes. She did not encounter the man described by the local dog-walker.

Mrs. Dinnin and Mr. Meischke to visit the occupants of the property opposite the illegal planting (one of the houses at the bottom of the Beaneside.)

Action: C. Dinnin/J. Meischke

Also, Mrs. Susan Jay of 12 Lammas Road wrote (on 20th February) as follows.

'Thank you for your response to my e-mail yesterday. Following my telephone conversation with Mrs. Dinnin I was advised to write to the Parish Council with my request.

My family and I moved into our house in Lammas Road last September, we have a beautiful garden overlooking the River Beane and the Lammas. However, we would like to ask whether it would be possible for some shrubs or trees to be planted on the river bank. We would be very willing to contribute towards the cost of purchasing them, we feel, especially now we have an information board opposite our house, our privacy has become jeopardized and with a small number of plants on the bank we will be able to enjoy our garden and deck without feel 'on show'.

Whilst we understand the Lammas and river are public property and available for all to enjoy, and we ourselves do appreciate the privilege of living at this address, we hope very much you will look favorably upon our request.

I would be very grateful if this matter could be brought to the council's attention at the next meeting and look forward to hearing your response.

Thank you for your kind attention.'

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had spoken to the Countryside Management Service and the Environment Agency about Mrs. Jay's request. Sue Jarczewski (Countryside Management Service) has agreed to visit the Lammas to see if any planting on our river bank is required and if so will recommend the type of planting we should undertake.

It was agreed to write to Mrs. Jay informing her that planting of any type on the Lammas is strictly controlled and cannot be done unless it is part of a programme of works approved by the appropriate authorities/agencies and that we are at present waiting for our representative from the Countryside Management Service to visit the Lammas to see if any planting on our side of the river bank is required. Also, making her aware that planting along the river bank has always been a sensitive issue and if she considers some form of planting on her side of the river-bank, it would be wise to contact the Environment Agency first for their approval.

Action: C. Dinnin/J. Allsop

We had also received a phone call from Christine Ellison (24 Lammas Road) about the poor condition of the Black Poplar trees that were pollarded last year. Mrs. Dinnin has spoken to Sue Jarczewski about the trees and suggested that they are inspected in the autumn of 2006 to see if they recover during the growing season. A decision on their future can be made at this stage.

Mrs. Dinnin to speak to Christine Ellison accordingly.

Action: C. Dinnin

Sue Jarczewski has suggested that we have a public open-evening to present the work done on the Lammas (including the installation of the interpretation boards). It was agreed that because of past experience of such occasions we do not pursue the matter further.

- **Cottage site - letter from Sue Jarczewski**

Mrs. Dinnin read out a letter (dated 22nd February) from Sue Jarczewski, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

See attached

- **Site meeting at Walkern Road**

Mr. Knight, Mrs. Dinnin and the Clerk attended a site meeting with Raj Goutam and Ian Bishop (Hertfordshire Highways representatives).

It was agreed that the visibility over the bridge was poor and would be improved by the removal of some shrubs along the boundary of the Waggon and Horses public house and garden.

Mr. Goutam agreed initially to contact the tenants of the Waggon and Horses public house to ask them to cut back the excess shrubbery. If this is unsuccessful, Hertfordshire Highways will arrange for the shrubs to be cut back to the boundary line.

This item to remain on the agenda until resolved.

Agenda: 04/06

- **Open Access Land in Hertfordshire - letter from HCC**

HCC Open Access (wrote on 16th February) to say that they have identified the Lammas as a piece of public open space in Watton-at-Stone. They have asked us to confirm that the land is owned and managed by us.

It was agreed to write to HCC informing them that the Parish Council owns the area identified by them (namely the Lammas) and has a Management Plan with the Countryside Management Service.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Flood Wardens**

Paul Cross (Flood Incident Management Officer, Environment Agency) wrote on 9th February asking if the Parish Council would be interested in being involved with the local Flood-Warden scheme.

It was agreed that Mr. Knight should be the Parish Council Flood-Warden representative and Mrs. Dinnin to be the Flood Warden for the northern end of the village.

Mr. Michael Freeman (of 10 Rivershill) is already the Flood Warden for the Rivershill area.
Mrs. McCash said that she is the Flood Warden for the High Street; from her work address at 95 High Street.

The Environment Agency to be notified accordingly.

Action: I. Knight/J. Allsop

b) Sportsfield

i) Report

This item was not done because the Clerk forgot to pass it to Mrs. McCash for completion.
The Clerk apologised to the Parish Council for this error.

• Entrance to the MPPA

Mr. Knight said that the Tennis Club will sweep the mud from the entrance to the MPPA.

ii) Weekly report and action

There was nothing to report from Ted Brown's weekly inspections.

9 Correspondence received

a) Environment Agency – The Upper Lee Catchment Abstraction Strategy

The Environment Agency consultation document on the Upper Lee Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy has been on circulation.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Knight sent (via e-mail) all Parish Councillors a copy of his proposed response to this document.

'Thank you for involving us in the consultation process on the Upper Lee Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy.

We make the following points in the context of your tabulation of key issues for consultation on page 27.

- The maps contained in the Consultation Document on pages 16 and 17 indicate that there is no surplus water available for new housing or industrial developments in the whole of the catchment area. Any significant development in the area will require water to be "imported" from beyond the area.
- This is a key point to be communicated to local and national government in the context of Planning Approval particularly in the "West" of Stevenage development and all the implications of the East of England Plan.
- A further important point is that made on page 4, The CAMS area, in section 3.1 Hydrogeology and Hydrology. The statement is made that "the source of the River Lee during prolonged dry periods is the flow from the East Hyde Sewage Treatment works". This is surely a highly significant point when considering the pattern of low flows in both the River Beane and the Mimram.
- The low flow problems would be solved if water used in the towns along both rivers was treated in local sewage works and the water returned near or above the points of abstraction.

We are suggesting the only long term sustainable strategy for the River Beane is that there is local treatment of Sewage from Stevenage with the return of treated water being made into the River near Whitehall or even higher up the River Beane valley.

The current practice of pumping all sewage to Rye Meads treatment plant is short sighted and the treated outflow from the sewage works provides no major benefit as the River Lee is mature at that point.

We trust these comments are helpful.'

It was agreed to send this letter to the Environment Agency.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Letter from Susan Jay, 12 Lammas Road

This item was discussed under item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Lammas Riverbank (on pages 4 and 5 of these minutes).

c) East Herts Council – Bus permit bulk-issue

Mr. Poulton and the Clerk will issue bus permits at Glebe Court on Tuesday 28th March from 0930 to 1130.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

d) East Herts Council – grant application

This item was discussed under 7 a, Lammas Road street lighting (on page 3 of these minutes).

10 Reports from other Organisations

• Watton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association

The allotment and Garden Association is going to develop another three plots from the disused area of the allotments.

It was agreed that when members of the public contact the Clerk enquiring about obtaining an allotment, she must record their names and contact details and then inform Mr. Poulton or Mr. Meischke accordingly.

- **Watton-at-Stone School Governors**

Mr. Clark said that Watton-at-Stone primary school has been awarded Child Centre Status, which will attract a significant amount of funding. They are the first school in Hertfordshire to obtain this status. The school already has a drop-in centre for parents, which caters for children of 0-11 years of age. Currently the Breakfast Club at the school opens at 0700.

The Pre-School Playgroup (currently located in School Lane) will be moving to the school site in the future.

All improvements to school performance have been made possible by a good Head teacher and Head of Governors.

- **Inter parish conference**

Mr. Clark and Mr. Meischke attended the 2006 inter parish conference on 14th February.

Mr. Clark reported on the items discussed, which were:

- Future developments at Stansted Airport
- Green Belt Policy.

- **Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup**

Mrs. Dinnin said that since her election to this post, she has not been invited to attend any pre-school playgroup meetings or events.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup advising them that Mrs. Dinnin is their Parish Council representative.

Action: J. Allsop

11 Items for Parish News

None.

12 Accounts

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Receipts

None

Payments

None

Cheques required

Ted Brown	Weed kill and maintenance work around play area and MPPA	25.00
Ted Brown	19 hours litterpick	123.50
J. Allsop	BT telephone headset	40.98
P. B. Borlase	To cut down tree on Perrywood Lane	200.00
East Herts Council	Emptying and maintenance of 2 dog-waste bins	203.37
D. R. Monk	Leaf clearance work	100.00
Blue Bury Contractors	Installing 2 interpretation boards on the Lammas	141.00
Watton Service Station	Shingle for War Memorial site	<u>25.51</u>
		<u>859.36</u>

Cheques received

None

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Jim Keen – Main Hall	30.00	4 AA batteries	2.99
Floodlighting to 08.02.06	220.00	Banked	<u>295.00</u>
Gill Gilbey – Main Hall hire	<u>40.00</u>		<u>297.99</u>
	<u>290.00</u>		

Cheques required

Rosemary Brown	17 hours cleaning	102.00
H M Customs & Excise	VAT return 01/06	88.09
J. Phillips	Opening toilets at Community Hall	<u>32.00</u>
		<u>222.09</u>

Cheques received

S. Taylor	Pavilion and Main Hall hire	45.00
East Herts Council	Deposit for 2006 summer play scheme	<u>100.00</u>
		<u>145.00</u>

Mrs. McCash proposed that the Parish Council approve the above payments, Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion, and all present were in favour.

- **The meeting closed at 2105.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 12th April 2006.**