

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 20th March 2012

Present:	Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Mr. Denis Filer	Mr. Iain Harris (after 1917 until 2028)
	Mr. Ian Knight	Mr. Nigel Poulton
	Mr. David Stock	Ms. Emma Waltham
	The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)	

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence from Mrs. Christine Dinnin and Mrs. Helen McCash.

2 Public Participation

None

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

4 Declaration of Interests

None

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st February 2012**

Mr. Filer proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Ms. Waltham seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Find out if our current Parish Council insurance policy covers for the Jubilee Picnic event**

Mr. Smith said he had spoken to AON limited, who confirmed that the Parish Council's current insurance policy (provided it is renewed again on 1st June 2012) would cover the Jubilee Picnic.

Mr. Harris arrived at the meeting.

- **Draft Write to Hertfordshire Highways re request for additional salt bins**

Mr. Smith read out an extract of an e-mail, dated 13th March, from Eralp Yucelt (Hertfordshire Highways).

'Firstly, with regards to the salt bin in High Street junction with Walkern Road near the post box. It appears that this missing salt bin has not been included within the HCC inventory, therefore I will have to treat this location as a 'new request'. Currently Hertfordshire Highways are not installing any new bins, however I will include these two locations in our 'list' for future consideration.'

Mr. Smith gave all Parish Councillors present a salt bin location map of the village. He had included on the map the bins requested for Hazeldell and the High Street/Walkern Road junction, plus a salt bin that Mr. Meischke had requested for Rivershill.

Mr. Poulton said he has spoken to Eralp Yucelt, who, in principal, could see no objection to the Parish Council buying the additional salt bins requested, but the bins would need to be marked as the property of Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.

Mr. Yucelt will look at the possibility of the salt bins being filled by Hertfordshire Highways. The salt could either be provided free of charge or invoiced to the Parish Council. A third option would be for the Parish Council to buy, store and fill the bins themselves. However, this is not a practical solution because the Parish Council does not have any storage facilities for salt. Mr. Poulton also discussed with Mr. Yucelt the possibility of the Parish Council buying new salt bins to replace the damaged Hertfordshire Highways owned bins in the village out of funds from the New Homes Bonus.

Mr. Poulton said that there was no need for the Parish Council to write formally to Hertfordshire Highways re the purchase and filling of salt bins.

- **Contact the Police re traffic problem in Great Innings North**

PC Andy Woodward e-mailed on 5th March agreeing to contact Ms. Waltham direct concerning the traffic problems at Great Innings North.

The Clerk to forward Ms. Waltham the e-mails relating to this topic.

Action: J. Allsop

Ms. Waltham to e-mail PC Andy Woodward.

Action: E. Waltham

- **Write to Hertfordshire Highways re drain in Perrywood Lane**

Mr. Smith read out an extract of an e-mail, dated 13th March from Eralp Yucelt (Hertfordshire Highways).

'With respect to the blocked drain near No 2 Perrywood Lane, I have included this location within our 'Jetting List' for the month of March. Subject to weather conditions and other priorities these gullies should be jetted/cleansed by Friday, 23 March 2012.'

Mr. Filer agreed to inspect the drain on Friday 23rd March and notify the Clerk to confirm that the work has been done or not.

Action: D. Filer

- **Write to Network Rail asking them to clear the rubbish in Perrywood Lane**

This action point was completed, however to date the rubbish has not been cleared.

The Clerk to chase Network Rail.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Ask James Turners Limited to give advice on how to frost protect the boilers and pipe work**

Mr. Poulton said that James Turner Limited have confirmed that the boiler pipe-work is frost protected.

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Poulton said that there are a lot of switches and pipes in the internal storeroom off the Main Hall (which backs onto the external boiler room cupboard) and they need to identify their different uses.

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke to meet with Mark from James Turner Limited, so he can explain exactly what the switches and pipes do and any other items concerning the central heating, hot and cold water systems.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Meischke

Mr. Poulton said that until this meeting has taken place, it was not possible to prepare the list of actions in the event of an emergency.

Whilst carrying out the repair works following the boiler leak, Mark (James Turner Limited) found the boiler room socket had not tripped. This should be investigated and the tripping action of the socket should be tested.

- **Obtain licences for live and recorded music**

Mr. Smith and the Clerk have both spoke to PRS for Music re a licence for live and recorded music for the Community Hall.

The Community Hall is not treated in the same manner as the War Memorial Hall because it is a Parish Council owned facility, regardless of the fact that it is run separate to the Parish Council and is a Charitable Trust. The War Memorial Hall is able to take out a combined live music and recorded music licence. This covers the hall but regular hirers (e.g. Ballet and Pilates classes) have to pay for their own music licences. The licence the Community Hall would take out covers the hirer for playing live or recorded music.

PRS for Music have supplied a quotation of £156.97; the break down of this cover is as follows.

For general music use, including Aerobic/keep fit classes (one usage per week)	£80.27
For Youth Clubs, centres and hostels based on one evening usage per week	£44.26
For Nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups and crèches	£32.44

Parish Councillors agreed to take out a music licence with PRS for Music,

Action: J. Allsop

The Clerk said that PRS for Music informed her that private parties held at the Community Hall do not require a music licence. The usage of the licence will be reviewed annually by PRS for Music and amendments made as required.

- **Prepare list of actions in the event of an emergency**

Refer to item 5 b, Review of Actions - Ask James Turners Limited to give advice on how to frost protect the boilers and pipe work.

- **Inspect footpath off Walkern Road**

Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Footpath from Walkern road to the Lammas.

- **Ask the Cricket Club to repair the down-pipe on the cricket shed**

Mr. Knight said that he had asked the Cricket Club to repair the down-pipe on the cricket shed, but to date, this has not been done.

- **Investigate Parish News advertiser using the Village Logo without a license**

Mr. Knight showed Parish Councillors the advert in the Parish News for the company that is using the Village Logo without a license. Mr. Harris said that unless the Parish Council have registered the Watton-at-Stone Village Logo, they could not stop it being used. The Clerk said that, as far as she is aware, the Village Logo is not registered.

It was agreed not to contact the advertiser who is using the Village Logo without a Parish Council licence.

- **Give the Clerk details of events being held at the Parish Church, for uploading to the website**

The Clerk said that Mrs. McCash is in the process of compiling a list of events being held at the Parish Church and when complete, will give these to the Clerk for uploading to the website.

- **Submit on-line consultation form re Pre-Submission Waste Site Allocations**

Mr. Smith looked at the on-line consultation form, which was very detailed and required technical knowledge on the subject. He therefore e-mailed all Parish Councillors and obtained agreement not to pursue submitting the on-line consultation form.

- **Draft a response to Chief Inspector McDonald's letter**

Mr. Smith read out the following letter, written by Mrs. McCash, to Chief Inspector McDonald.

'Thank you for your letter of the 26th January, please accept our apology for the delay in replying.

We note the comments made in your letter, but unfortunately we still feel that Watton at Stone is very low on the day to day policing priority list, although the response to call outs has improved.

We are totally unaware of the "Street Briefing" meetings which PCSO Sally Brookes has been holding, we would ask that in future the Parish Council's clerk (Jane Allsop) and the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator (Helen McCash), be made aware of these meetings to enable the necessary attendance to be made.'

Parish Councillors present at the meeting agreed to send the above letter to Chief Inspector McDonald.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Poulton said that he had recently complained to the police about the parking problems outside the school. PCSO Sally Brooks came out at 0830 the following morning and talked to parents about the parking of their cars. She also received abuse from one member of public who received a ticket. Mr. Poulton said that he could not fault the police response to this issue.

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Ask Halcyon Courts to submit quotation for repairing the damaged area of the MPPA surface**
Refer to item 8 a, Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee - MPPA – surface repair.

d) Action points resolved

1. Contact Alan Grant re litterbin on Abel Smith land near footpath to the Lammas

Mr. Smith said he spoke to Alan Grant who did not know who owned the bin. He suggested that the litterbin be moved and if anyone claims ownership, we can deal with the problem then.

Mr. Smith said that he had relocated the litterbin at the Walkern Road end of this footpath.

2. Obtain inserts to fit the square football goal post sockets
3. Remind Ted Brown to clear the leaves around the edge of the MPPA now the weather has improved
4. Order Jubilee mugs
5. E-mail notifications for new planning applications to all Parish Councillors
6. E-mail Parish Councillors the time of the Barratt Homes' presentation
7. E-mail Jonathan Hart re gates for the Great Innings Play area
8. Pursue petition in support of the installation of gates on the Great Innings play area
9. Write to Diocesan solicitors approving the draft lease
10. Copy letter to Hertfordshire Highways re request for additional salt bins to District Councillor
11. Copy letter to Hertfordshire Highways re drain in Perrywood Lane to District Councillor
12. Place a notice in the Parish News advising that the Gents toilets will be closed
13. Give the Clerk information on licences for live and recorded music
14. Inspect floodlighting
15. Contact Herts Tree Care informing them of East Herts Council decision re the Oak tree
16. Arrange a meeting with Richard Wilson of C-Trees re Oak tree on sportsfield
17. Speak to Adam Welch re the location of the sportsfield Oak tree in his tree report
18. Complete and submit a Groundwork Trust application form
19. Send Allotment and Garden Association letter out to all allotment holders
20. Reinstate repaired byelaw sign on the Lammas
21. Ask Ted Brown to spray the weeds around the sportsfield play area
22. Ask estate agent, Jonathan Hart, to remove their for sale sign by salt bin on Station Road
23. Contact Steve Betts re the new website banner
24. Write letter of thanks to Steve Betts for designing the website banner
25. Write new website page for village Logo
26. Update the Pub/Restaurant section of the website
27. Upload Young Farmers article to the 'Village Events and Notices' section of the website
28. E-mail a copy of Chief Inspector McDonald's letter to all Parish Councillors
29. Write to Minister Greg and our MP, Oliver Heald, re proposal to empower Town and Parish Councils
30. Renew CDA for Herts membership
31. Write to Mrs. Bunce re Community Service
32. Inform Cricket Club of Community Service
33. Write article for Parish News re Barratt Home sponsorship

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) 3, White House Close (3/12/0208/FP)

Two storey side and single store rear extensions (amended scheme)

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed all Councillors as follows.

'Consent was granted on 6th December on a previous application in respect of which the Parish Council made no comment.

So far as I can discern from the application, the owner wishes to double glaze the windows to the conservatory. This results in a slightly changed layout to the conservatory roof albeit that it is almost impossible to see this on the plans.

I see no problem with this very slight change and no need, under our new protocol to visit any neighbours. Given we made no comment before I propose no comment again and ask two councillors to support this response.'

Mr. Harris received in excess of two responses in support of his 'no comment' response and the Clerk was instructed to write to East Herts Council accordingly.

ii) 21 Lammas Road (3/12/0153/FP)

Single storey rear extension orangery and rooflights

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mrs. Dinnin visited the residents at 20 Lammas Road and they were happy with the plans and the residents at 22 Lammas Road, who were uncommitted at that time but had issues with windows and loss of view although they were aware these were not a planning issue.

In the light of Mrs. Dinnin's report, Mr. Harris, Mr. Stock and Mrs. Dinnin agreed a "no comment" response and the Clerk was instructed to write to East Herts Council accordingly.

iii) 49c High Street (3/12/0221/FP)

Two storey rear extension

This item was discussed with the item below.

iv) 49c High Street (3/12/0228/FP)

Demolition of rear extension

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mrs. McCash visited the neighbouring residents. They had no objections to the two applications and because of the nature of it, Mrs. McCash recommended that the Clerk be instructed to write to the Planning Department stating that the Parish Council had no comment on this application. Mr. Harris and Mr. Stock endorsed this recommendation.

v) 1-3, Mill Lane (3/12/0297/FN)

Extension to roof and refurbishment of existing building to provide 3 no. self contained commercial units with associated car parking and landscaping (Renewal of 3/08/2111/FO allowed on appeal)

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and after discussion with Mr. Smith and Mr. Poulton, instructed the Clerk to write to the Planning Department stating that the Parish Council had no comment on this application.

vi) 7 Rivershill (3/12/0323/FP)

Two storey and single storey front extensions. Rear canopy.

Mr. Harris asked Mr. Knight to look at the plans for this application and visit the neighbours. **Action: I. Knight**

The Clerk to print off the plans for number 7 Rivershill and give them to Mr. Knight. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Knight was given a copy of a letter from Mr. Dunhill objecting to this application.

b) Decisions

i) The White House, 99 High Street, Watton-at-Stone (3/11/1752/LB)

Erection of rear fence to enclose garden area (part retrospective)

-East Herts Council permission refused

ii) The White House, 99 High Street, Watton-at-Stone (3/11/1753/LB)

Retention of rear fence to enclose garden area (Listed Building consent)

-East Herts Council permission refused

Mr. Harris said he was disappointed with the refusal of permission for both applications at 99 High Street. He said this was yet another example of the planning department totally ignoring the Parish Council's views.

Mr. Poulton said he was also disappointed with the decision because he had worked hard with the owners of 99 High Street and the neighbours in White House Close, who were all happy with the privacy that the fences would afford to all those living in this cul-de-sac. He said that the planner's reasons for refusal were 'the fence, by reason of its scale, design and materials, is out of keeping with and detrimental to the setting of the Grade II Listed Building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area'.

7 Specific items

a) Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations - update

Mr. Smith reported that the Jubilee mugs have arrived and are currently being stored at Mrs. Dinnin's home. Parish Councillors were shown a sample of the mug.

The Parish Council has submitted a grant application form for £300 funding from the East Herts Council Olympic/Paralympics and Jubilee celebration grants fund.

The next meeting of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Committee is on Monday 26th March

b) Barratt Homes

Mr. Poulton said that the following article, accompanied by a photograph of Mr. Smith, Mr. Poulton, Mrs. Dinnin and Managing Director of Barratt North London, Brendon O'Neill, appeared in the 8th March 2012 edition of the Hertfordshire Mercury.

'Six trees planted to mark Queen's diamond celebrations

A roundel of six trees on the Lammas has been completed to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee, thanks to funding from Barratt Homes, which has built new development Gatekeeper Meadow in Station Road.

The £3,000 donation to Watton-at Stone Parish Council will also help pay for a village event on Sunday June 3, when villagers can bring a picnic to the sports field and be entertained by live music, face painting, a magician and stilt walkers.

Brendon O'Neill, managing director of Barratt North London, said: "We are happy to offer our support to the village of Watton-at-Stone and hope that our contribution will help ensure that the jubilee celebrations are a great success and the villagers will enjoy a weekend they will never forget.

"Community spirit is essential to making any new housing development a home and we like to encourage communities to come together whenever possible, especially on historic occasions like the Queen's diamond jubilee."

Cllr Nigel Poulton (Con, Watton-at-Stone) said: "We would like to thank Barratt Homes for the generous donation. It's great to see a company supporting the local community.

"The donation will mean that we can make the jubilee weekend in Watton-at-Stone great fun for all the family."

During discussion that took place after the presentation on 29th February, Mr. Smith asked Brendon O'Neill if Barratt Homes would be willing to flatten the bike ramp area on the Lammas, free of charge.

Mr. O'Neill agreed to do this and Mr. Poulton said he had explained to him exactly what the Parish Council required and will liaise with Barratt Homes to ensure that they understand our requirements. **Action: N. Poulton**

c) Terms of reference

Mr. Stock reported that on 13th March, the following letter was sent to Hannah Brownlow, together with Edition 1 of the Terms of reference of the Watton-at-Stone Playground Working-Group as proposed by the Parish Council

'As promised, I am now happy to enclose a copy of Edition 1 of the Terms of Reference of the Watton-at-Stone Playground Working-Group as proposed by the Parish Council.

As mentioned in my previous letter, the original terms of reference were discussed in detail by the full Parish Council and as a result were revised to bring them into line with our protocols. We also wanted to clarify aspects concerning responsibilities and the relationship between the Working Group and the Parish council.

The Parish Council is very supportive of your objectives and we hope that you find this document to be acceptable.'

Hannah Brownlow is to present the proposals of the Watton-at-Stone Playground Working-Group to Parish Councillors during an informal meeting on Monday 23rd April at 2000 in the Community Hall.

d) Great Innings play area

Ms. Waltham thanked the Clerk for arranging for petitions to be sent out around the village asking for support re the installation of gates on the Great Innings play area. She was pleased to report that, to date, 122 signatures have been received. Ms. Waltham said that a friend of hers had also been collecting signatures but she had not yet received these back.

The Clerk to write a letter to Jonathan Hart (East Herts Council) and give this letter and the petitions to Mr. Poulton.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Poulton to hand-deliver the petition to Jonathan Hart at East Herts Council on Thursday 29th March.

Action: N. Poulton

e) Allotments lease

Mr. Harris said that the new allotment lease has been received and he had signed the document, which now requires a second signature by Mr. Smith and witnessed, before returning to Debenhams Ottaway.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

The fees for drawing up the new lease total £1080.

- Rumball Sedgwick fees £120
- Debenhams Ottaway £960 (including £160 VAT)

- **Temporary hosepipe ban**

Mr. Knight e-mailed all Parish Councillors on 17th March attaching Veolia's notification of the hosepipe ban which commences at 0001 on 5th April 2012 and water-use restrictions explained. **(See attached)**

Mr. Harris e-mail response to councillors was as follows.

'Below is the text at clause 5 of the new allotment agreement re water.

There is nothing in the new lease with the Diocesan Board save that the PC has to pay the water charges

I suggest we copy all tenants with the regulations Ian has circulated and remind them that we expect them to observe these restrictions. The letter must obviously be a formal one to ensure that should any breach occur and steps be taken against the PC it will have a good defence and claim for indemnity against any allotment holder

I do not think we need do anything more

'5. To have consideration for other allotment holders at all times especially with respect to metered water usage. We encourage the installation of water butts, but sprinklers are not permitted, and hosepipe usage will be reviewed. In order to minimise water usage please try and use water before 0800 or after 2000 during the summer months. Water will be turned off from 1st November to 1st March.'

It was agreed to notify the allotment holders accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

All letters to be hand delivered to allotment holders (with the exception of the two allotment holders that do not live in Watton-at-Stone).

Action: J. Allsop/C. Dinnin/ N. Poulton

It was agreed to put up a laminated copy of Veolia's 'Notice of temporary ban on water use' on the allotment notice board, together with a copy of the relevant pages of the Veolia Water publication 'Restrictions explained'.

Action: C. Dinnin

f) New homes bonus

Parish Councillors agreed that projects identified for financial support from the New Homes Bonus funds are listed and prioritised.

Mr. Filer agreed to put together and maintain the list as Chairman of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

Action: D. Filer

Projects already identified to date, in no order of preference, are:

- Tennis court
- Bus Shelters
- Playground equipment
- Great Innings play area gates
- Replacement Main Hall flooring
- Additional storage at the Community Hall
- Beautifying the village
- Planting of specimen trees on the sportsfield
- Salt bins

Mr. Filer asked Parish Councillors to e-mail him any additional projects that need including on the list.

Action: Parish Councillors

g) Standing Orders

Mr. Smith said that the Clerk had today e-mailed all Parish Councillors with the draft Standing Orders. He asked all Parish Councillors to look through this document and email any comments to the Clerk.

Action: Parish Councillors

Mr. Poulton agreed to read though the draft Standing Orders to compare them with the NALC version he modified in autumn 2011.

Action: N. Poulton

Mr. Smith said he would like this document approved by the Parish Council at its April meeting, so it can be adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May. This item to remain on the agenda. **Agenda: 04/12**

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
None		None
Cheques issued		
Gift Selection	350 Jubilee School Mugs	918.00
Third Hertford Scout Group	Deposit for tent hire for the Jubilee picnic	20.00
CDA for Herts	Annual subscription	30.00
Adam Welch	leaf clearance	150.00
Blue Bury Contractors	trees, sundries and labour	1,132.80
East Herts Council	Parish Council elections - 5 May 2011	111.84
Wages and salaries	March 2012	1073.25
Virgin Media	Phone charges to 03/03/2012	21.90
		<u>3,457.79</u>

Cheques received

Ella Barnes (Alan Cross)	Allotment rent to 30 th September 2012	16.50
Adam Welch	Allotment rent to 30 th September 2012	16.50
Barratt Homes	Jubilee grant towards	<u>3000.00</u>
		<u>3033.00</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Barbara Smart – Pavilion	12.00	Postage re incorrect goal posts	13.72
Sharon Ling –Pavilion	36.00	Laidlaw - 1 Key	25.69
Floodlighting to 20.03.12	253.00	Lock Stock and Barrell Ltd – 2 keys	27.80
Watton Youth Football – Main Hall	8.00	Lock Stock and Barrell Ltd – 1 keys	5.99
Peter Khera – donation towards keys	<u>32.37</u>		<u>73.20</u>
	<u>341.37</u>		

Cheques issued

Adrian Thompson	jobs in and around the Community Hall	250.00
H. M. Revenue and Customs	VAT return 01/12	261.11
Wages	March 2012	336.60
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials	98.16
James A Turner Limited	new toilet cistern plus repair of burst pipe	432.74
James A Turner Limited	repair to hot water boiler and thermostat	899.33
		<u>2277.94</u>

Cheques received

Watton School	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	996.75
Watton School	for Dots and Tots	84.00
Mr. Griffin, Watton House	meeting room	10.00
Mrs. Townsend	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	54.00
		<u>1144.75</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

- **Community Hall annual insurance renewal**

Mr. Filer said that in April 2010, the Parish Council accepted a quotation for insurance cover on the Community Hall from Norris Fisher Insurance Brokers Limited for a three-year undertaking with Ansvar Insurance.

Norris and Fisher wrote on 24th February 2012, advising that the premium for 2012/13 is slightly increased at £1,233.64, due to the rise in insurance tax premium. They also offered the option to extend the Long Term Undertaking (LTU) for another three years, to 2015, for a discounted premium of £1,165.17.

Mr. Filer recommended that the extended LTU be accepted and all Parish Councillors present were in agreement. The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

A copy of the Community Hall insurance documents to be e-mailed to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Internal Audit of Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012**
 It was agreed to re-appoint Mr. Jim Morrissey to carry-out the internal audit of the Parish Council accounts.
 The Clerk to arrange for the Parish Council accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2012, to be submitted to Jim Morrissey for auditing. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **External audit of Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012**
 It was agreed to re-appoint McCash and Hay to carry-out the audit of the Community Hall accounts.
 The Clerk will arrange for the Community Hall accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2012, to be submitted to McCash and Hay for auditing. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Community Hall Rates**
 Mr. Filer said that the rate demand is up from £1125.80 to £1190.80. The Community Hall benefits from an 80% rate relief.
 Mr. Filer said that the War Memorial Hall has 100% rate relief and asked why the Community Hall only had 80%.
 Mr. Poulton explained to councillors who were not aware of the situation, that to obtain 100% rate relief a Community Hall management committee would need to be formed and members would include regular hirers. The Parish Council would then lose control of the facility. It was agreed when the facility was built that the Parish Council should manage (via the board of Trustees) the Community Hall to avoid 'special-interest groups' taking control.
 Mr. Harris said that the general rule is that charities automatically pay 50% of the rate demand and the other 50% is at the discretion of the district council. Mr. Poulton said he had fought a very hard battle this year to maintain the discretionary relief's at their current level.

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Poulton reported on the following item.

- **Licence for live and recorded music**
 Refer to item 5 b, Review of actions - Obtain licences for live and recorded music.
- **List of actions in the event of an emergency**
 Refer to item 5 b, Review of actions - Prepare list of actions in the event of an emergency.
- **Insurance claim for the damage to the boiler**
 The water leak from the boiler caused damage to a thermostat and to the gas fired water heater. James Turner Limited has completed the repair work at a cost of £749.44 plus VAT and an insurance claim for the damage has been submitted to Ansvar via our agents Norris and Fisher. If the claim is successful, an excess of a £100 will apply.
- **Closure of outside gents toilets**
 After discussion, it was agreed to leave the gents toilets open until 1st May and not on 1st April (as advertised in the March edition of the Parish News).

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **MPPA – surface repair**
 Mr. Knight said that he had spoken to Halcyon Courts who said that, because the area of damage is so small, it would be too expensive for them to come out specially to assess the damage. They will therefore visit the MPPA when they happen to be in the area.
- **Sportsfield maintenance**
 Mr. Knight and Mr. Smith to meet on site at the sportsfield to discuss what maintenance works need to be done by Frank Cooper and Son. **Action: I. Knight/M. Smith**

Environment Sub-Committee

In the absence of Mrs. Dinnin, Mr. Smith reported on the following items.

- **Oak tree on sportsfield**

Mrs. Dinnin, Mr. Smith and Mr. Poulton met with Richard Wilson, from C-Trees, on 27th February to discuss further options for the Oak tree on the sportsfield.

Mr. Wilson e-mailed his revised report to Mrs. Dinnin, which included a table of options. This report was then forwarded to all Parish Councillors. Following e-mail discussions, in which Parish Councillors were asked for their favoured option, it became evident that the preferred option was for 15% crown reduction by radius, plus deadwood removal, plus bracing.

This option involves removing 1.5 – 2 metres from each branch, distributed around the crown according to crown weight and removal of all deadwoods (from late July to early September) and the installation of non-invasive Cobra bracing (in November to March).

The cost of this work is £2350 and future pruning would be required in 4 to 5 years time.

The Clerk e-mailed Malcolm Amey on 2nd March as follows.

‘Three of my councillors met again with Richard Wilson from C-Trees on 27th February to discuss the Oak tree on the sportsfield.

He has now produced a revised report (see attached). Please refer to new pages in this report on pages 13 to 15.

Are the schemes in this revised report acceptable to you and do we need to submit a fresh application to East Herts Council. I believe the Parish Council would be particularly interested in the last option, which C-Trees has highlighted in yellow.

We would appreciate an early response to this e-mail.

With thanks for all your help.’

Mr. Poulton said that he spoke to Malcolm Amey (East Herts Council) yesterday, who had just returned from holiday and therefore only just seen the Clerk’s e-mail of 2nd March. Mr. Amey would be prepared to consider any of the options outlined in C-Trees report but would require a new application for tree works to be submitted.

The Clerk to submit a new application requesting the option for 15% crown reduction by radius plus deadwood plus bracing.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Poulton said that Malcolm Amey also recommended that the Parish Council remove the bench under the Oak tree. He was involved some years ago in an incident where a child sitting on a seat was killed by a falling branch. Mr. Knight said that this bench is predominately used by Tennis spectators.

Mr. Knight and Mr. Smith to discuss the relocation of the bench under the Oak tree.

Action: I. Knight/M. Smith

When a relocation site has been agreed, a letter to be sent to Michelle Hart, who donated the bench in memory of her husband Paul, informing her of the situation.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Adam Welch Tree report**

Adam Welch has confirmed that the two sportsfield Oak trees he refers to in his tree report are the ones closest to Church Walk.

- **Groundwork Trust**

In Mrs. Dinnin report, she states that following submission of the Parish Council’s application for a grant towards regenerating the bike ramp area, Groundwork rang to say that they would inspect the Lammas on 13th March and contact again. To date, Mrs. Dinnin has not been contacted.

It was agreed to ask Mrs. Dinnin to contact Groundwork Trust to tell them that Barratt Homes would be leveling the bike ramps area. Groundwork Trust has already informed her that they would be unable to do any ground leveling works.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Footpath on Walkern Road to the Lammas**

Mr. Smith said that the footpath from Walkern Road to the Lammas is not a designated footpath. However, the Parish Council have over recent years kept it cut back for the convenience of walkers. In Mrs. Dinnin’s report, she state that you have to dodge underneath some branches to keep to the original path and Adam Welch has quoted £60 to cut them back. Mr. Smith said that the Parish Council is under no obligation for us to do anything.

Ian Harris left meeting at 20.28.

b) Routine reports**i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests on Sunday 18th March.

ii) Monthly village-report

Mr. Knight completed the report on Sunday 18th March.

- Cricket shed – the down-pipe need of repairing and the Cricket Club have been asked to attend to this.
- MPPA – the chain-link fencing on the sportsfield side of the MPPA needs securing with wire.

Action: I. Knight

iii) Weekly sportsfield-report and action

None.

iv) Website

None

v) Website diary

None.

9 Correspondence received**a) Petition - Request for measures to control speeding, Whempstead Road, Whempstead - Update**

All Parish Councillors have been copied with an e-mail, dated 28th February, from Paul Patmore (Hertfordshire Highways).

Mr. Smith said that it looks as though it is not Hertfordshire Highways intention to reduce the speed limit to 30mph but they may consider reducing the speed to 40mph and improve signage in the area. Mr. Poulton said that any improvements would need to come out of Bryan Hammond's new locality budget and this would be considered a very low priority.

Mr. Poulton said that there is a lot of money involved in reducing speed limits to 30mph and the speed levels measured during trials in the area do not warrant such a low speed restriction. In addition, the Police would not have time to enforce the restriction because they are unlikely to come into such a rural area on a regular basis.

He said that Hertfordshire Highways had already put a lot of time and effort into researching the speeding of vehicles in Whempstead.

b) CDA for Herts – Grants for War Memorials

Mr. Smith said that the CDA grants are for major repair and restoration works to War Memorial. The Watton-at-Stone War Memorial does not fall into this category.

c) Holly Wakefield - request for grant

All Parish Councillors were copied with a letter from Mrs. Michelle Wakefield requesting grant aid in respect of her daughter Holly. Holly has recently been selected to represent England at the Dance World Cup in Austria in June, following her outstanding results at the all England National Finals. Holly is seeking funding to cover the estimated costs of attending the event, which will be between £1000 and £1,500.

Mr. Smith said that Mr. Harris advised in an e-mail to all Parish Councillors (dated 9th March) that "unless we are given authoritative legal advice to the effect that we can make such grants, I would suggest that we resolve that we will not entertain any such requests as we have no legal power to grant funds. If we do so resolve, then any one approached can give a clear response."

In October 2010, the Parish Council received a similar request and after contacting the Society of Local Council Clerks received the following advice from Lionel Thatcher.

"No, there is no provision for making that type of grant. You could only use Section 137 but this requires that the grant should be for the benefit of most residents, which this clearly isn't.

Your only hope would be to adopt the Power of Wellbeing and then you can spend money on pretty much anything you like!"

Parish Councillors agreed that it was not appropriate to give Holly Wakefield a grant towards her trip.

Mr. Smith to write to Mrs. Michelle Wakefield accordingly.

Action: M. Smith

d) East Herts Council Olympic/Paralympics and Jubilee celebration grants

This item was discussed under 7 a, Specific items - Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations – update.

e) Proposal to empower Town and Parish Councils

Mr. Smith reminded Parish Councillors that at the February Parish Council meeting it was agreed to support the proposals to empower Town and Parish Councils by writing to Communities Minister Greg Clark.

Mr. Smith was pleased to report that an agreement has been secured with Communities Minister, Greg Clark, on the proposal made under the Sustainable Communities Act to give new powers to Town and Parish Councils to help them properly assess major planning applications that will affect their areas.

10 Village organisations

- **Watton Youth Drop Inn**

Mr. Poulton said that the Watton Youth Drop Inn would be holding its AGM on Monday 16th April at 1930 in the meeting room at the Community Hall.

He said that due to the low level of volunteers and youth club membership numbers dropping, consideration would be given to closing the Watton Youth Club at the end of June.

- **Watton-at-Stone School Governors:** Nothing to report.

- **Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Watch:** Nothing to report.

- **Watton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association:** Nothing to report.

- **Watton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Mr. Stock said that he had been informed by Mr. Filer that the electricity bill for the last three months was in the region of £1,100. This is because War Memorial Hall is heated by electric heating.

Parish Councillors suggested that the War Memorial Hall Management Committee could consider some form of a less expensive heating system, which then could be considered as a candidate for a grant from the New Homes Bonus.

Mr. Filer to raise this with the War Memorial Hall Committee.

Action: D. Filer

- **Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup:** Nothing to report.

- **Watton-at-Stone Scout & Guide Group**

Mr. Poulton said he would be attending the Scout and Guide Group AGM on Wednesday 25th April at 7.30 in the Scout Hut.

- **Watton-at-Stone Sports & Social Club**

Ms. Waltham said that the next quarterly meeting of the Sports and Social Club is on Tuesday 27th March.

- **Police Authority** Nothing to report.

- **River Beane Restoration Association:** Nothing to report.

11 Items for Parish News

There was one item identified for inclusion in the May 2012 issue of the Parish News.

- **The Parish Council petition great innings play area.**

Action: J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2054.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 17th April 2012.**