

## Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012

|                 |                              |                                   |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Present:</b> | Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman) | Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman) |
|                 | Mrs. Christine Dinnin        | Mr. Denis Filer                   |
|                 | Mr. Iain Harris (until 2015) | Mr. Ian Knight                    |
|                 | Mr. David Stock              | Ms. Emma Waltham.                 |
|                 | The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop) |                                   |

**Members of public:** None.

### 1 Apologies for absence

Leave of absence: Mr. Nigel Poulton

Apologies for absence: Mrs. Helen McCash.

### 2 Public Participation

None.

### 3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

#### • Lighting

Mr. Meischke said that Lloyd Jones of Benington reported to him that a lamppost at Whempstead had been knocked down. Mr. Smith said he went to inspect the site and found that Hertfordshire County Council contractors were already in the process of removing the lamppost.

The light at the top of the Hockerill slope was reported out by the Clerk on 19<sup>th</sup> November. Despite numerous telephone calls, this light has not been repaired. Mr. Stock said that the light near the entrance to Watton Place Clinic is also out. He agreed to give the column number to the Clerk so she could log the fault on the Hertfordshire Highways website.

**Action: D. Stock**

The Clerk to write to Hertfordshire County Council asking them to repair the light at the top of the Hockerill slope as a matter of urgency.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**Note:** The light at the top of the Hockerill slope has now been inspected and is awaiting new parts before it can be repaired.

### 4 Declaration of Interests

None.

### 5 Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012**  
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.
- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012**  
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

#### b) Review of actions

##### 1. Contact Adrian Thompson re lifting paint on external toilet floor

Mr. Meischke asked for this item to be deferred to the March Parish Council meeting because at this time of year there is too much moisture to apply floor sealant successfully.

**Agenda: 03/2013**

##### 2. Arrange to meet with Tony Jackson, East Herts Council

The Clerk has spoken with Tony Jackson who will liaise with Peter Ruffles re District Council coverage during Mr. Poulton's absence.

##### 3. Write to the Head Teacher of Watton School re Parish Council representative

Mr. Stock said after reading Mr. Smith's letter (dated 13<sup>th</sup> November) to the head teacher at Watton-at-Stone school, he felt that any further written communications would not be necessary at this stage. He therefore contacted Mr. Smith to discuss this matter further and they both agreed that the Action Point be cancelled.

Mr. Stock then explained the reasons for this to the meeting and all present agreed with the decision to cancel the Action Point.

##### 4. Inspect Hockerill slope and if required, ask Adam Welch to clear the fallen leaves

Mrs. Dinnin said that she inspected the Hockerill slope, which currently does not need any further leaf clearance. She said that the complaint about fallen leaves probably referred to the footpath between 76 and 78/80 High Street. This footpath was cleared by Adam Welch.

**c) Action points resolved**

1. Inform Hannah Brownlow of the Community Hall bank account name
2. **Give all Parish Councillors hardcopies of ‘Edition 4 of the Planning Protocol’**  
The Clerk said she had not completed this action point. It was agreed that in place of hardcopies, all Parish Councillors be e-mailed a copy of Edition 4 of the Planning Protocol. This document to be uploaded to the Watton-at-Stone website. **Action: J. Allsop**
3. Obtain quotations for clearance work on Parish Council land at Rivershill
4. Write again to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor re rubbish on Parish Council land
5. Obtain quotation for clearing the rubbish on Parish Council land at Rivershill
6. E-mail draft budgets to all Parish Councillors
7. **Give all Parish Councillors hardcopies of ‘Policy and Agreement document for cutting a set of keys’**  
The Clerk said she had not completed this action point.  
It was agreed that in place of hardcopies, all Parish Councillors be e-mailed a copy of the Policy and Agreement document for cutting a set of keys. This document to be uploaded to the Watton-at-Stone website. **Action: J. Allsop**
8. Purchase two plastic snow shovels from County Supplies
9. Speak to the Football Club re mud on the paths and up the walls of the Community Hall
10. Remove damaged bin liner and check bin for bag liner
11. Arrange for Pavilion tables to be taken out of table rack for cleaning
12. Modify Planning protocol from 4<sup>th</sup> Version to read Edition 4
13. Upload to website 4<sup>th</sup> edition of Planning Protocol and the new Financial Regulations
14. Write to Watton Place Clinic re defibrillators
15. Write to Adam Welch in response to his e-mail
16. Contact Highways department re letter from Mr. Capon
17. Write to John Capon in response to his letter re various village matters
18. E-mail Datchworth Parish Council re Neighbourhood Plan
19. Contact Christine Emsley re Parish Council representative on the Scout and Guide Group
20. Contact Claire Pullen re grants available from East Herts Council
21. **Put Diamond Jubilee photographic booklet on circulation and then pass to Allen Rattue**  
Mr. Meischke passed the booklet to Ms. Waltham for her input.  
After inspection, Ms. Waltham to give the booklet back to Mr. Meischke. **Action: E. Waltham**  
The booklet to be passed to Allen Rattue for inspection. **Action: J. Meischke**

**6 Planning**

**a) Applications**

- i) **32 Rivershill, Watton-at-Stone SG14 3SD (3/12/1969/FP)**  
Replacement single storey rear utility extension and part of garage  
In line with the Parish Council’s Planning Protocol, Mr. Harris reviewed this application and e-mailed his findings to all Parish Councillors. Following approval from Parish Councillors, the Clerk was instructed to e-mail East Herts Council as follows.  
‘The Parish Council has no comment on the above application.’

**b) Decisions**

- i) **Roundabout, Ware Road/A602 Watton At Stone Bypass**  
4no. freestanding post mounted signs with coloured graphics and text detail to front, powder coated to reverse **-East Herts Council permission refused**  
Mr. Harris said that Hertfordshire County Council submitted this application to East Herts Council.  
If planning permission had been granted Hertfordshire County Council would have sort sponsors to use these boards for advertising purposes.  
If planning permission had been granted, Hertfordshire County Council would have sort sponsors to use these boards for advertising purposes.
- ii) **Whempstead Farm, Whempstead (3/12/1548/FP)**  
Replacement 3 bay timber frame garage **-East Herts Council permission granted**
- ii) **Emilys Cottage, 2 Whempstead Cottages, Whempstead (3/12/1758/FN)**  
Single storey rear extension (renewal of application 3/09/1484/FP) **-East Herts Council permission granted**

**c) Appeals**

**i) Land East of Walkern Road and North and, West of High Elms Lane, Benington**

Erection of a single wind turbine of up to 86.5m in height, substation, access tracks and ancillary infrastructure

- Planning Inspectorate dismissed appeal

**7 Specific items**

**a) Car sales in Watton-at-Stone High Street**

It was reported at the November Parish Council meeting that a sole trader has been parking cars for sale in the lay-by opposite the Bull pub. They were only parking one vehicle at any one time. Trading Standards were made aware of the situation and after investigation informed the Parish Council that it is not illegal to advertise single vehicles for sale.

Mr. Meischke said that there have not been any cars parked advertised for sale for more than six weeks.

Mr. Harris said that if the problem reoccurs the Parish Council could make Revenue and Customs aware of the situation.

**b) Sub-Committees**

**Budget & Finance**

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

• **Monthly accounts**

| <b>Watton-at-Stone Parish Council</b> |  |                              |                |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>          |  | <b>Petty cash - Payments</b> |                |
| John Holloway – Allotment rent        | <u>£13.25</u>                                  | None                         |                |
|                                       | <u>£13.25</u>                                  |                              |                |
| <b>Cheques issued</b>                 |  |                              |                |
| Michael Smith                         | Tree Heritage for trees and shrubs             |                              | 117.60         |
| Ted Brown                             | 32 hours litterpick x £7.90                    |                              | 252.80         |
| J. Allsop                             | November salary                                |                              | 761.09         |
| J. Allsop                             | November housing allowance                     |                              | 27.00          |
| J. Allsop                             | Phone charges to 10/2012                       |                              | 21.90          |
| Affinity Water                        | Allotment water charges to 1st December 2012   |                              | 20.71          |
|                                       |  |                              | <u>1201.10</u> |
| <b>Cheques received</b>               |  |                              |                |
| Thomas Best                           | Allotment rent                                 |                              | <u>26.50</u>   |
|                                       |  |                              | <u>26.50</u>   |
| <b>Watton-at-Stone Community Hall</b> |  |                              |                |
| <b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>          |  | <b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>  |                |
| Floodlighting to 02.12.12             | 430.00   | None                         |                |
| Sharon Ling – Pavilion                | 36.00  |                              |                |
| Rebecca Angel – Main Hall & Pavilion  | 26.00  |                              |                |
| Fatima – deposit for hiring on 30.12. | 50.00  |                              |                |
| Linda Thurlow – Meeting room          | <u>10.00</u>                                   |                              |                |
| Jim Keen – Main Hall                  | <u>50.00</u>                                   |                              |                |
|                                       | <u>602.00</u>                                  |                              |                |
| <b>Cheques issued</b>                 |  |                              |                |
| H. B. Thompson                        | 24 hrs cleaning x 7.65p                        |                              | 183.60         |
| Wicksteed Leisure Limited             | repairs to play area                           |                              | 252.00         |
| Rosemary Brown                        | 20 hrs cleaning x 7.65p                        |                              | 153.00         |
| D. P. Electrics Limited               | PAT testing and fit guards to emergency lights |                              | 228.00         |
|                                       |  |                              | <u>816.60</u>  |
| <b>Cheques received</b>               |  |                              |                |
| East Herts Council                    | Pavilion hire for elections                    |                              | 128.00         |
| Watton School for Dots and Tots       | pavilion hire                                  |                              | 98.00          |
|                                       |  |                              | <u>226.00</u>  |

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **Approval of minutes of Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

Parish Councillors approved minutes.

• **Community Hall Hire charges**

Parish Councillors agreed that the Community Hall hire-charges should remain the same gross amount (i.e. gross including VAT regardless of the percentage rate).

- **The Sports and Social Club hire-charge**

Parish Councillors agreed that the Sports and Social Club hire-charge be increased from £2,700 to £2,800 per annum.

The Clerk to write to the Sports and Social Club accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Floodlighting charges**

Mr. Meischke to see if the floodlighting coin machine can be altered in 1-minute increments.

**Action: J. Meischke**

Floodlighting charges to be discussed at the next meeting of the Community Hall Trustees.

**Agenda: Trustees**

- **Allotment rents**

Parish Councillors agreed that the allotment rent remains the same.

Namely: Rent at £20 per full allotment and £10 for one half of an allotment.

The Parish Council took over responsibility for paying the Allotment water charges from 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012. To establish more precisely how much to charge the allotment holders annually for water, a full years water charges need to be paid by the Parish Council.

Water charges payable by the Allotment holders, for the year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014, to be reviewed by the Parish Council at its July meeting.

**Agenda: 07/2013**

- **Various quotations**

Parish Councillors agreed that the following quotations be accepted.

- **Frank Cooper and Son Limited's** quotation of £54 per cut (plus VAT), to gang-mow the sportsfield grass be accepted.
- **Ted Brown's** quotations of £80 and £30 per cut for strimming and mowing works and £60 for pruning the Community Hall garden once a year be accepted.
- **Nick Whitehead's** verbal quotation of £370 (plus VAT) for sportsfield hedge cutting be accepted.
- **Blue Bury Contractors** quotation of £1,295 plus VAT for grass cutting work on the Lammas and Watton Green be accepted.

The Clerk to write to all contractors accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **High Street maintenance work, leaf clearance, mowing and strimming work in the village**

In 2012, the Parish Council entered into a three-year contract, of £2,700 per annum, with Adam Welch (Greenwood Tree Care) for the High Street maintenance work, leaf clearance, mowing and strimming work in the village.

- **Employees and self-employed remuneration**

This item was discussed under 'Exclusion of the Public and Press' and the meeting was closed to the public.

The Clerk left the meeting while her salary was discussed and returned again when these discussions had been completed.

- **Budget 2013/14**

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of the draft budget-figures for 2013/2014.

Mr. Filer said that he and the Clerk had reviewed each item and compared the figures with those already spent this year and in previous years. A similar process was then repeated at the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on the 27th November and alterations made where necessary.

For the benefit of Mr. Harris and Ms. Waltham, who were not present at the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 27th November, Mr. Filer went through each item in the budget.

Parish Councillors agreed to accept the draft 2013/14 budget figures for the Parish Council and Community Hall.

- **Gas contract**

Mr. Filer said that the British Gas wrote on 23<sup>rd</sup> November giving their prices for a new gas contract to commence on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The Clerk was also in contact with Make it Cheaper who provided a quotation from Gasprom. On Instruction from Mr. Filer, the Clerk telephoned British Gas to ask them if they could reduce the price of their quotation.

The quotations received were as follows.

|                                | Fixed price period | Standing charge | Gas Unit p/kWh | Usage  | Total cost to nearest £ |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------------------------|
| By post:<br><b>British Gas</b> | 12 month           | 65.620 / day    | 4.862          | 67,000 | £3,497                  |
| Make it Cheaper<br>Gasprom     | 24 months          | 0p /day         | 3.78           | 67,000 | £2,533                  |
| <b>By telephone</b>            |                    |                 |                |        |                         |
| British Gas                    | 24 months          | 0p /day         | 3.789          | 67,000 | £2,539                  |
| British Gas                    | 24 months          | 75.15p / day    | 3.207          | 67,000 | £2,423                  |

Following authorisation from Mr. Filer, Mr. Smith, Mr. Stock, and Mr. Knight, the Clerk verbally accepted the following quotation from British Gas.

|             | Fixed price period | Standing charge | Gas Unit p/kWh | Usage  | Total cost to nearest £ |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------------------------|
| British Gas | 24 months          | 75.15p / day    | 3.207          | 67,000 | £2,423                  |

Mr. Filer thanked the clerk for her good work in negotiating the contract with British Gas.

- **Precept 2013/14**

The Parish Council agreed a Precept of £30,065; the Precept forms were duly signed by Mr. Smith, Mr. Filer, and Mr. Knight and countersigned by the Clerk.

The completed precept form to be returned to East Herts Council.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Filer said that Adele Taylor, the newly appointed Director of Finance and Support Services at East Herts Council wrote on 12<sup>th</sup> December regarding the provision of a government grant for the tax base year 2013-14. The letter suggests that there is more funding available to the parishes.

It was agreed to reply to Adele Taylor informing her of the precept agreed by the Parish Council.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **SLCC Annual membership**

The SLCC membership renewal is £127. The membership provides the Parish Council with legal advice and useful information about changes in legislation, e.g. changes in accounting practices. Although this information is also available from the Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, their annual membership fee would be in the region of a thousand pounds.

Parish Councillors agreed to renew the SLCC membership.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **SLCC - Tax advice**

The SLCC tax advice notes suggest that the Clerk may need to pay tax and NI on her monthly housing allowance and on the phone bills she submits to the Parish Council.

It was agreed to ask McCash and Hay to confirm the situation.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Ms. Waltham said that it would appear that Beane Valley would not be moving into new facilities until spring 2014. The delay in their move is because slow worms, which are a protected species, have been found on site and they need to be moved after they have come out of hibernation.

Mr. Harris left the meeting.

## Community Hall Trustees

None.

## Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight asked Mr. Smith to report on the following item.

- **Sportsfield hedge**

Mr. Smith said that following inspection, he had installed a Berberis shrub in a gap in the sportsfield hedge. The remaining gaps in the hedge have almost disappeared due to the increased growth during the excessively wet summer.

## Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Jubilee wood planting**

The Jubilee wood planting has now been completed with lots of village groups involved.

- **Parish Council land at Rivershill**

Mrs. Dinnin and Mr. Meischke met Adam Welch on site at the Parish Council land at Rivershill. Adam has now provided a quotation for clearing the tree that has fallen onto this land.

Mrs. Dinnin said she had also spoken to TreeSmiths to ask them to provide a quotation but they had not yet got back to her. Mrs. Dinnin to chase. **Action: C. Dinnin**

Adam Welch has provided a quotation of £60 to clear the rubbish dumped at the entrance of the Parish Council land at Rivershill. Mr. Meischke said that he had spoken to Mr. Taylor of 48 Rivershill, whose land adjoins the Parish Council's and he had apologised that his gardener was dumping rubbish without his knowledge. He agreed to arrange for the removal of the rubbish. Mr. Taylor is still interested in either renting or purchasing the Parish Council's land.

Parish Council land at Rivershill to be placed on the agenda for the January Parish Council meeting. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Jubilee garden**

Mr. Smith has planted three Birch trees in the Jubilee garden on the Lammas.

- **Oak tree on sportsfield**

Mr. Smith said that the fencing, with warning notice, has now been installed around the Oak tree.

### c) Routine reports

#### i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests

Mr. Meischke will carry-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests after the meeting. **Action: J. Meischke**

#### ii) Monthly village-report

Mr. Knight completed the report on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

Only the adverse items highlighted in the monthly village-report are minuted.

- **Oak tree on sportsfield:** Elder is growing at the base of the Oak tree. Ted Brown to be asked to cut it back. **Action: I. Knight**

- **Sportsfield hedge:** the Holly hedge at the top of sportsfield is very overgrown and needs cutting back. Mr. Knight said that the fencing the Cricket Club put up to stop balls going into the hedge is now easily two to three feet into the hedge line. Mr. Smith said that cutting back the hedge by such a large amount at one time might cause overall damage to the hedge. The residents of Glebe House, who own the hedge will be contacted in the first instance and then quotations obtained to have the hedge cut. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Play area:** There are glass fragments by the see-saw. Ted Brown to be asked to remove. **Action: I. Knight**

- **MPPA:** There are leaves in MPPA drainage channels. Ted Brown to be asked to remove. **Action: I. Knight**

- **Salt bins** – The Salt bin at the junction of High Elms Lane with Walkern Road to be added to the Monthly village-report. **Action: J. Allsop**

#### iii) Weekly sportsfield

None.

- **Floodlighting:** Mr. Meischke collected £80 in floodlighting donations prior to the meeting.

#### iv) Website

The Clerk to upload the following documents to the Watton-at-Stone website.

- Edition 4 of the Planning Protocol
- Policy and Agreement document for cutting a set of keys to be held by a hirer of the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall. **Action: J. Allsop**

#### v) Website diary

None.

## 8 Correspondence received

### a) East Herts Village Hall Network meeting

The next East Herts Village Hall Network meeting will be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January from 1330 to 1500 at the Aston Village Hall.

Due to prior commitments, no Parish Councillors present were able to attend on 10<sup>th</sup> January.

**b) Watton-at-Stone Post Office – public consultation re move into supermarket store**

Post Office Limited have written to advise the Parish Council that Watton-at-Stone Post Office is due to move their services from the current location at 119F High Street to the Londis Watton Village store situated behind the current premises. The current owners of Watton Post Office, who also run the village store, and keen for the move, which they believe will provide better services to the village whilst ensuring the safety of this village service.

**c) AOS Renewables - Air source heat pumps**

Mr. Smith said that he had looked at the air source heat pump literature provided by AOS Renewables. Although this is quite a good idea for new builds to provide under floor heating etc, it was probably not suitable as a retro fit.

Mr. Smith said he would investigate further at the possibility of retro fitting an air source heat pump at the Community Hall.

**Action: M. Smith**

**• Beane/Mimram Catchment plan**

Mr. Knight said that as a follow up from the Beane and Mimram Catchment Plan meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are arranging another event on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013. He said that a draft plan should be available on-line by January 2013.

The purpose of this event is:

- to launch the Beane/Mimram Catchment Management Plan website
- to show what projects have been suggested for the rivers to date
- to explain what happens next and how the plan will result in on-the-ground action
- to gather comments on the plan and the process.

Mr. Knight and Mrs. Dinnin to attend the meeting.

**Action: I. Knight/C. Dinnin**

**• P3 grant**

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had asked Tony Bradford if work to the Lammas riverbank could be included in the 2013/14 P3 grant. Mr. Bradford has agreed to investigate.

Mr. Knight said that the Environment agency is not responsible for clearing the waterways. They only get involved when something major happens like waste hazards.

**9 Village organisations**

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

Mr. Filer said the War Memorial Hall is currently having nine new double-glazed windows fitted. Work is expected to be finished by the end of this week.

**• Watton-at-Stone Scout & Guide Group:** Nothing to report.

**• Watton Youth Drop Inn:** Nothing to report.

**• River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Knight said he would be circulating a letter, via e-mail, sent from the Beane/Mimram Catchment Partnership to Jenny Pierce (Senior Planning Officer, East Herts Council).

**Action: I. Knight**

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Watton-at-Stone Playschool held its Winter Warmer on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December. She was unable to attend the event but understood that it was a success.

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

Mr. Knight said that the Sports and Social Club will be holding their next meeting in January 2013, the actual date of which still needs to be arranged.

**• Police Authority:** Nothing to report.

**10 Items for Parish News**

No items were identified for inclusion in the February 2013 issue of the Parish News.

**• The meeting closed at 2033.**

**• The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013.**