

## Minutes of the meeting of the Wotton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013

**Present:** 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 The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

**Members of public:** Mrs. Slater and Mr. Fowler (left the meeting at 1925)

### 1 Apologies for absence

Leave of absence: Mr. Nigel Poulton.

Apologies for absence: Mrs. Helen and Ms. Emma Waltham.

Mr. Stock gave his apologies for the February 2013 Parish Council meeting.

### 2 Public Participation

Mr. Smith read out the following letter from Mr. Slater, dated 5<sup>th</sup> January.

'I wish to complain about the anti social behaviour of some of the village youth, who spend most of their time in the Community Hall car park after dark. There are five or six of them who are boys who left school in September 2011 who are unable or unwilling to work to earn their living. Last night, 4<sup>th</sup> January, they had Chinese takeaway food and left all the wrapping and leftovers strewn around the car park just a few yards away from a rubbish bin. Ted told me that he had never seen anything like it before. Sauces were spilled on the on the steps which Ted scrubbed of this morning.

Of late, the window of the hall was broken by footballs and slates off the roof are being dislodged by footballs being deliberately kicked up there.

Young drivers of cars and motor scooters are often parked outside the hall with ghetto blasters at maximum decibels. They also have removed their baffles from the exhausts and continuously rev up to annoy us locals. As I write this at a quarter to five in the evening it is dark, but footballs are being kicked around on the car park, youths over 14 years using the swing park, contravening the byelaws.

Some of them quite recently excreted in the ladies toilets. The police do not seem to bother about this village although I and others have complained to them quite often and we have also contacted the local MP.

Perhaps you should employ a park-keeper to keep them in check.'

Mr. Slater and Mr. Fowler were invited to talk about the problems in the vicinity of the Community Hall.

Parish Councillors discussed the possibility of improving the lighting around the Community Hall and car park area, including installing CCTV cameras in this area. Mr. Slater suggested that a notice be put up in the car park stating no balls games to be played. The Clerk to e-mail the sportsfield byelaws to Mr. Smith, Mr. Meischke and Mr. Harris.

**Action: J. Allsop**

It was agreed to contact PC Andy Woodward, copying him with Mr. Slater's letter, and inviting him to attend the February Parish Council meeting to discuss the youth problems in this area, how best to improve the lighting at the Community Hall and also talk further about any possibilities for surveillance cameras in the area.

**Action: J. Allsop**

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

Mr. Smith had one additional item for this meeting.

- Letter from RBRA – refer to item 9 c, Correspondence received.

### 4 Declaration of Interests

None.

### 5 Minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012**  
 Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

#### b) Review of actions

##### 1. Contact residents of Glebe House re sportsfield hedge

Mr. Knight said he had agreed to do this action point in place of the Clerk.

**Action: I. Knight**

##### 2. Investigate the possibility of fitting an air source heat pump at the Community Hall: Outstanding.

**Action: M. Smith**

**3. Attend Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January**

Mr. Knight and Mrs. Dinnin confirmed that they would be attending the launch and would report back to the Parish Council.

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

**4. Pass Diamond Jubilee photographic booklet back to Mr. Meischke after inspection: Outstanding.**

**Action: E. Waltham**

**5. Pass Diamond Jubilee photographic booklet to Alan Rattue for inspection**

Mr. Meischke said he is unable to complete this action point until Ms. Waltham has returned the Diamond Jubilee photograph booklet to him

**Action: J. Meischke**

**c) Action points resolved**

1. Give Clerk the number of the Station Road lighting column that is not working
2. Contact Hertfordshire County Council re lighting problems
3. E-mail Edition 4 of the planning protocol to all Parish Councillors
4. E-mail the Policy and Agreement document for cutting a set of keys
5. Write to the Sports and Social Club re annual hire charges
7. See if the floodlighting coin machine can be altered in 1-minute increments
8. Accept contractors quotations
9. Return completed Precept forms for the year 2013/14
10. Write to Adele Taylor, East Herts Council re Tax base for 2-013/14
11. Renew SLCC membership
12. Ask McCash and Hay to confirm the situation re Clerk's Tax and NI
13. Chase TreeSmiths re quote for clearance work on Parish Council land at Rivershill
14. Carry out emergency lighting test
15. Ask Ted Brown to cut back the elder growing at the base of the Oak tree
16. Ask Ted Brown to clear broken glass from around the see-saw at the sportsfield play area
17. Ask Ted Brown to clear leaves in the MPPA drainage channels
18. Add the salt bin at the junction of High Elms Lane to the 'Monthly village-report'
19. Upload to the Watton-at-Stone website Edition 4 of the Planning Protocol
20. Upload to the Watton-at-Stone website the Policy and Agreement document for cutting a set of keys
21. Circulate letter from the Beane/Mimram Catchment Partnership to East Herts Council

**6 Planning**

**a) Applications**

**i) Beane Cottage, 11 Walkern Road, Watton-at-Stone (3/12/2062/FP)**

Two-storey side extension to East

Mr. Harris said that this application is for permission to build a 2-storey extension of 2.7 meters width and 7.6 meters depth. The planned extension abuts the Parish Council land on which a memorial bench is sited.

The site plan is misleading in that some of the land within the application area is leased to the applicant by the Parish Council.

In terms of the planning protocol, there are no immediate neighbours. However, this raises a slightly different issue in that it is the Parish Council itself that is most likely to be affected.

Mr. Harris said that in his view, as long as the applicants have sufficient land upon which to build the extension, in planning terms, no objection should be raised. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have confirmed, via e-mail, that they have sufficient land.

After discussion, the Parish Council agreed to respond to the planning department as follows.

'The Parish Council considered this application and resolved to make no comment on the planning aspects of the application.

However, the Parish Council is concerned that the plans submitted by the applicant purport to include land which is only licensed to the applicant by the Parish Council. A copy of the licence is attached.

The Parish Council will be making its concerns known to the applicant.'

**Action: J. Allsop**

It was agreed to write to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor re their intentions about the Laurel hedging on the boundary between their land and the Parish Council's and requesting they meet with Mr. Smith to discuss this further.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**b) Withdrawn**

**i) Blue Hill Farm, Walkern Road (3/12/1737/FP)**

Boundary treatment to include new wall and gate

-Application withdrawn

**7 Specific items**

**a) Highways faults**

The light at the top of the Hockerill slope (reported as out by the Clerk on 19<sup>th</sup> November) has still not been repaired. The problem with repairing this light is that a normal roadside cherry picker cannot get to this location, because the site is not adjacent to a roadway and a different type of cherry picker is required.

The light near the entrance to Watton Place Clinic has now been repaired

It was agreed to e-mail and telephone Hertfordshire Highways urging them to repair the light at the top of the Hockerill slope as a matter of urgency. **Action: J. Allsop**

**Note:** The Clerk telephoned Highways Faults. She told them that if anyone fell in this snowy weather due to the dark conditions, that Hertfordshire Highways would be liable and she suggested that they use a ladder to repair the light. The light at the top of the Hockerill slope was repaired the following day by two men using a ladder.

Mr. Harris suggested that the Clerk keep an electronic Highways faults journal for lighting and roadway faults and upload the document to the Watton-at-Stone website. This document to be updated as and when necessary. This was agreed by Parish Councillors. **Action: J. Allsop**

All Parish Councillors to inspect the areas they live in and report any lighting and roadway faults to the Clerk. **Action: Parish Councillors**

**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>	
None	None	
<b>Cheques issued</b>		
St. Albans Diocesan Board	Allotments rent	300.00
Salary and Wages	January 2013	906.59
SLCC	Annual subscription	127.00
J. Allsop	Phone charges to 01/2013	21.90
		<u>1355.49</u>

**Cheques received**

None

<b>Watton-at-Stone Community Hall</b>		
<b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>	<b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>	
Floodlighting to 08.01.13	140.00	None
Sharon Ling – Pavilion	12.00	
Jim Keen – Main Hall	10.00	
Fatima - Main Hall & Pavilion - excludes £50 deposit paid	94.00	
Dots and Tots – Main Hall	16.00	
Victoria Stuart Main Hall plus Pavilion	45.50	
Watton Ramblers – Pavilion	<u>7.00</u>	
Julia Gibbons	<u>129.60</u>	
	<u>454.10</u>	

**Cheques issued**

Wages	January 2013	380.35
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials	56.27
Affinity Water	Water	109.81
BSWW Parish News	Community Hall advert in Parish News	100.00
		<u>646.43</u>

**Cheques received**

Watton School for B.V.C.C.	Hire of the Main Hall and Pavilion facilities	780.31
Felicitas Dixon	Pavilion hire	189.00
Felicitas Dixon	Pavilion hire	14.00
Mr. and Mrs. Webb	Hire of the Main Hall and Pavilion facilities	56.00
Badminton Club	Hire of the Main Hall	<u>162.00</u>
		<u>1201.31</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

- **9-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of the 9-monthly statement of accounts for the period ending the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

Mr. Filer went through the expenditure and income items for both the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts and explained the variations in both statements.

**Parish Council Accounts**

**Expenditure**

- **Parks and Open Spaces**

Land Management - General – the main item under this heading is £1400 for work to the Oak tree.

The Clerk to move the £445.06 expenditure for the fence around the oak tree from ‘Sportsfield maintenance’ to ‘Other’.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Highways/Footpaths/Rights of Way etc**

Lighting energy and maintenance shows one year’s charges for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and represents 104% of the budgeted figure.

- **Income**

The total income of 98.6% includes Rubbish Collection, Allotment rents (including water charges) and the Precept, which are all full year receipts. One further payment is due from the Sports and Social Club, which will bring the income up to 99.6% of the budgeted figure.

**Community Hall**

**Expenditure**

Council tax Represents 9 out of 10 payments due for the year.

Gas and electricity These are both under budget for the time of year, however the winter quarters payments have not yet been submitted.

Mr. Filer said he remained concerned about the annual gas and electricity charges.

Maintenance 108% of budget (£757) – items included under this heading are: £200 for the decommissioning of the gents toilets, £126 to replace a broken window, £130 for the repair of the brick wall, plus other smaller maintenance items.

**Income**

Main Hall Above 75% of the annual budget at 81%

Pavilion Just below 75% of the annual budget at 73.8%

- **9-monthly inspection of accounts**

Mrs. McCash has been unable to do the 9-monthly inspection of accounts due to the late arrival of the current bank statements. Mrs. McCash will carry out inspection of accounts before the February Parish Council meeting.

**Action: H. McCash**

- **Clerks Tax and NI**

The Clerk to chase McCash and Hay for a response to the Parish Council’s request for confirmation about the Clerk’s status re paying tax and NI on her monthly housing allowance and on the phone bills she submits to the Parish Council.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**Community Hall Trustees**

- **Minutes of meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

The Trustees accepted the minutes, which were then signed by Mr. Meischke as a true record.

- **Minutes and report on meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

The Trustees accepted the minutes, which were then signed by Mr. Meischke as a true record.

- **Damage to brick wall adjacent to the Community Hall**

The Trustees minuted recommendation was to accept the verbal quotation received from Mark Blacktin. However, after the Trustees meeting, Mr. Meischke, Mr. Stock and Mr. Knight looked at the damaged wall in detail and, for a number of reasons, felt that it would be better to only rebuild the wall up to the point where it would be in-line with the Community Hall wall, thus being shorter than it was. A metal barrier could then be installed for the remaining section, i.e. to protect people using the footpath to the toilets and changing rooms, give better vehicular access and reduce the risk of the wall being damaged by vehicles using the car park.

Mr. Meischke to obtain written quotations from at least three building contractors and contact the Community Hall insurance brokers to see if a claim can be made (The current excess of the Community Hall insurance policy is £100).

**Action: J. Meischke**

The Clerk to give Mr. Meischke the contact details for StoneWheele who repaired the brickwork around the manhole cover on the sportsfield.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Playground sign**

This item was discussed at the Trustees meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012, where it was agreed to ask Mr. Harris to comment during the Parish Council meeting in October on the RoSPA's suggested wording for play-area signage .

However, in error, this item was not discussed during the Parish Council meeting in October 2012.

Mr. Harris agreed to find his original comments on the subject.

**Action: I. Harris**

This item to be placed on the February 2013 Parish Council agenda.

**Agenda: 02/2013**

- **Floodlighting**

Mr. Meischke said he had inspected the floodlighting coin-mechanism and established that it can be altered in increments of one-minute.

Since February 2007, the mechanism has been set at 8 minutes per £1.

It was agreed to review floodlighting charges at the July Parish Council meeting.

**Agenda 07/13**

- **Community hall lock**

Laidlaw Locking Systems have written to advise us that the master-key system at the Community Hall is no longer covered by a patent or copyright protection. This means that the keys to the Community Hall can now be copied by anyone who is able to obtain a key blank.

The Trustees agreed that the security of the Community Hall is top-priority and, as a minimum, new security locks should be fitted to both external doors to the building. Michael Lewis (A. P. Access) was asked to estimate the cost of installing the new locks. He has verbally informed the Clerk that the cost of each lock will be approximately £75, plus an installation cost of £50, plus VAT. It was agreed to ask Michael Lewis to supply and install two new locks and 26 keys.

**Action: J. Allsop**

During discussions about the security of the building, it was acknowledged that the security of the building is also reliant on hirers locking the doors after they leave the building, which, as reported by Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock, does not always happen. It was agreed that any such events in the future should be taken up with the hirer involved as a matter of urgency and to remind them of their obligations.

## Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight had nothing to report under Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee.

## Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Parish Council land at Rivershill**

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

Mr. Smith left the meeting while this item was discussed and returned again when these discussions had been completed.

Mr. Taylor of 48 Rivershill, whose land adjoins the Parish Council's has not yet arranged for the removal of the rubbish dumped on Parish Council land by his gardener. It was agreed to review the situation at the February Parish Council meeting.

Parish Council land at Rivershill to be placed on the agenda for the February Parish Council meeting.

**Agenda: 02/2013**

- **Oak tree on sportsfield**

Richard Wilson (C-Trees) intends to install the Cobra bracing on the Sportsfield Oak tree, at the end of January.

- **Allotment**

- **Public liability insurance**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the allotment public liability insurance taken out by the Allotment Holders Association is almost twice as much as it was last year.

- **Water charges**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Allotment Holders Association is concerned about the water charges. She informed them that until the Parish Council has paid for a least one years water charges, the Parish Council could not confirm the costs involved.

- **Pot hole**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the allotment holders association are concerned about a large pothole part way down the access road on the allotments. Parish Councillors agreed that the Allotment holders could fill in this hole. Mrs. Dinnin to notify them accordingly.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Lammas footpath**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the footpath at the Mill Lane end of the Lammas is in a bad state.

Mrs. Dinnin to ask Adam Welch to put down some chippings.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

**c) Routine reports**

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

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Smith carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests prior to the meeting.

**ii) Monthly village-report**

Mrs. Dinnin completed the report on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

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

- **Graffiti** - on Cricket shed wall.
- **Play area safety surface** – signs of wear under large swings.
- **See-saw** – Mrs. Dinnin said that the see saw needed oiling. Wicksteed Leisure serviced the see-saw late last year.
- **Community Hall** – mud on windows. The Clerk to arrange for the windows to be cleaned.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Notice on MPPA out of date** – Mr. Knight agreed to replace the notice with an up-to-date version.

**Action: I. Knight**

- **Poppies wreaths** – it was agreed to remove them in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of February **Action: J. Meischke**

- **Salt Bin** –some of the salt bins are empty and all of them need refilling. Contact Hertfordshire

Highways asking them to fill the salt bins as soon as possible.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**iii) Weekly sportsfield**

None

**iv) Website**

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

- Lighting and roadway faults journal.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**v) Website diary**

None.

## 8 Correspondence received

**a) E-mail from Martin Ketcher – Water Vole conservation officer**

Martin Ketcher (Water Vole Conservation Officer, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) e-mailed (on 17<sup>th</sup> December) the results of the 2012 water vole survey carried out on the banks of the River Beane from Mill Lane as far as the Walkern Road.

The survey was carried out by two trained water vole surveyors and Watton residents, Bob and Anthea Thornton. Unfortunately, no evidence of water voles was found.

The Clerk to e-mail all Parish Councillors a copy of Martin Ketcher’s e-mail.

**Action: J. Allsop**

**b) Letter from Harry Slater**

This item was discussed under item 2, Public participation, where it was agreed to forward Mr. Slater’s letter to PC Andy Woodward asking him to attend the next meeting of the Parish Council so that Parish Councillors can discuss lighting issues at the Community Hall, installation CCTV cameras and the increased anti-social behaviour in the area of the Community Hall.

**Action: J. Allsop**

The Clerk to e-mail Mr. Meischke a copy of the sportsfield byelaws.

**Action: J. Allsop**

The Trustees to consider installing a notice stating ‘no ball games to be played in the car park’.

**Action: Trustees**

**c) Letter from River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Smith read out a letter, from Ian Knight (Secretary, River Beane Restoration Association) outlining the current work that is being done to improve the flow of the River Beane and asking for a donation of £25 towards their running costs.

Parish Councillors agreed to make a donation of £25 to the RBRA.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## 9 Village organisations

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

Mr. Stock said that he would be attending the next War Memorial Hall Management Committee meeting on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January.

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

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

- **River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Knight said that Charlotte Bell, (Hertfordshire Living Rivers Officer, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) e-mailed on 11<sup>th</sup> January as follows.

‘As you may know, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust are currently involved in the production of a Catchment Management Plan for the River Beane, in partnership with a number of different people and organisations including the River Beane Restoration Association. One of the projects that has been suggested for the plan is the restoration of the stretch of river in the Lammas at Watton-at-Stone. This section has historically been straightened and has lost some of the diversity in form and flow which a healthy river should have.

A few months ago I visited the Lammas with representatives from the RBRA and the Environment Agency, to have a look at the stretch of river in question and discuss how it could potentially be restored. It was suggested that ‘deflectors’ and other in-channel structures could be installed in the river to add variety to the flow and provide habitat for invertebrates and fish, and that some work could be done to overhanging trees to allow more light to reach the river and allow bankside and in-channel vegetation to develop. After this meeting I believe some people from the RBRA attended your Parish Council meeting to discuss the proposals.

Any work undertaken in river channels must be accompanied by a flood risk assessment, to ensure that the work will not increase the risk of flooding at the site in question, or downstream. The Environment Agency have offered to pay for such a survey. Would it be ok if they, along with myself, visit the Lammas next week to discuss the proposals and furnish the flood modeller with enough information to enable him to produce a report? Only after receiving such a report can any plans be developed further.

Obviously as owners of the land we would like the Parish Council to be involved and to work with us on this potentially exciting restoration project. If you consented to the work, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust would undertake the project management and delivery, so this shouldn’t involve any extra work for the Parish Council.

If you’d like to discuss any of this please feel free to contact me (details below). I look forward to hearing from you.’

Mr. Knight said that as indicated in the e-mail above, the Environment Agency will be paying for the survey along the Lammas stretch of the River Beane.

Parish Councillors expressed concern that Charlotte Bell’s e-mail suggests that the Parish Council would be responsible for paying for the improvements to the flow of the River Beane along the Lammas stretch, including the installation of baffles. Mr. Harris said that this was not something the Parish Council were ever asked to consider.

After discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Knight should draft an e-mail (for Mr. Smith’s approval) to Charlotte Bell agreeing to the survey.

**Action: I. Knight**

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

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

- **Watton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association**

Refer to 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.

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

- **Watton-at-Stone Sports & Social Club:** Nothing to report.

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

## 10 Items for Parish News

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

- **The meeting closed at 2109.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.**