

## Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013

**Present:** Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman) Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. Denis Filer Mr. Ian Knight  
Mrs. Helen McCash 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. Christine Dinnin and Mr. Iain Harris

### 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 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013**  
Parish Councillors approved the minutes.

#### b) Review of actions

##### 1. Arrange for McCash and Hay to audit the Community Hall accounts

The Community Hall accounts are currently with McCash and Hay for auditing.

##### 2. Review the Community Hall's Child-Protection policy

Mr. Stock said that he had done a quick review of our current child-protection policy, firstly as a stand-alone document and then compared it with the policy prepared by the Community Development Agency for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH) (which was e-mailed to us on 18<sup>th</sup> March by Richard Richardson, Chief Officer - CVSBEH). As a result of his brief review, Mr. Stock felt that there is a need for us to re-write our child-protection policy and proposed that this be put on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Community Hall Board of Trustees. He also noted that we needed to review our policy on an annual basis and suggested that this be an Agenda item for the Parish Council meeting held in May.

It was agreed to put this item on the agenda for the July meeting of the Trustees. **Agenda: Trustees 07/13**

Mr. Meischke said that the Watton Youth Drop Inn had recently reviewed their policy to conform to the legal requirements concerning Child-Protection.

##### 3. Contact the owners of the Bull re the hedge adjacent to the footpath leading to Rivershill

Mr. Meischke said that he had spoken to the owners of the Bull Pub, who did not realise that the hedge had overgrown into their car parking area.

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Smith agreed to find out who owns the hedge. **Action: J. Meischke /M. Smith**

#### c) Action points resolved

1. Take Parish Council accounts to Jim Morrissey for internal audit on 22<sup>nd</sup> April
2. Arrange for the ferreting licenses to be renewed
3. Arrange for the cottage site licence to be renewed
4. Instruct Adam Welch to trim a meter wide strip on the allotments as and when required
5. Licence the Village logo
6. Forward Caroline McFarlane e-mail dated 2<sup>nd</sup> April re e-mail policy
7. Present Summary of 12-monthly statement of accounts for the year ended 2011/12 at Annual Parish Meeting
8. Renew CPRE annual membership

9. Renew Parish Council insurance with Aon Limited
10. Add trip hazards to the 6-monthly check
11. Install new playground sign
12. Grass seed the goalmouths and fertiliser the sportsfield before the end of April
13. E-mail Mr. and Mrs. Humby re overgrown hedges
14. Install replacement disabled car parking sign
15. Report broken glass on play area incident to the Police
16. Write to Hertfordshire Highways re potholes in Hazeldell

Mr. Stock was very unhappy that the Parish Council had not received a response to his e-mail to Raj Goutam concerning potholes in Hazeldell. (This e-mail was in response to Raj's reply to our initial letter to him on the subject.). It was agreed that Raj Goutam be chased for a response and also that Ken Crofton (our new County Councillor) be given a copy of Mr. Stock's e-mail. **Action: J. Allsop**

17. Write to Hertfordshire Highways re short notice given re road closures.

## 6 Planning

### a) Applications

None.

### b) Decisions

#### i) 86 Hazeldell (3/13/0396/FP)

Upgrade to existing single storey extension by replacing conservatory with traditional-built extension and pitched roof. Overall rear aspect rationalised. -East Herts Council – permission granted

## 7 Specific items

### a) Logo copyright

Mr. Smith said that he and the Clerk had today submitted an on-line application to copyright the Watton-at-Stone Logo.

### b) E-mail policy

Parish Councillors agreed that the e-mail disclaimer that Parish Councillors use when sending out e-mails on behalf of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council or Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Trustees was sufficient as an e-mail policy. Namely:

#### **‘Important**

This e-mail is confidential and intended for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. Any views or opinions presented are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.’

### c) Notice outside 51c High Street

The sign outside 51c High Street has been removed.

The Parish Council has had no contact from East Herts Council re their concern about the colour of the Chinese takeaway sign. This item to be put on the July Parish Council agenda. **Agenda: 07/13**

### d) Funding of playground equipment

Mr. Smith read out an e-mail received from Mr. Scott on 1<sup>st</sup> May

‘I have received details of the requirements for a successful application to EHDC in respect of funding for Watton playground improvements *including*

Copy of the Parish Council accounts for 2012/3

Recent bank statement for current and savings accounts together with current account details : Sort code and account number

Estimates for income and expenditure for the next financial year

Letter from the Parish council detailing any financial support the council can give to the project.

The closing date for the application is 31st May 2013 so it would be helpful if we can receive this information at your earliest convenience’.

In reply, the following e-mail was sent to Mr. Scott on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

The Parish Council/Community Hall Trustees has made clear its support for the scheme when funds become available from the New Homes Bonus. Due to the slow uptake, these funds have yet to come to fruition and may dry up when the Government completes its spending review. Under these circumstances, the Parish Council cannot commit itself to excess funding at this time.

If it is possible can the group, according to the TOR below, provide a written report in time for our next meeting (date)

2.1.2 The Group shall prepare a Strategic Plan for the Scheme to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fund-raising project. This shall be presented to the Parish Council for approval.

2.1.3 In support of the Strategic Plan, the Group shall prepare a Capital Plan for the Scheme. This shall include recommendations for sources of financing and be presented to the Parish Council for approval.

2.1.4 The Group shall oversee the implementation of the Strategic and Capital Plans, including the preparation of funding applications and the identification of suppliers.

2.1.5 The Group shall provide to the Parish Council within 21 days of its written request a written report on the:

progress against the Strategic and Capital Plans  
activity of the Group.

The group have subsequently sent their report on the Strategic and Capital plans

Parish Councillors agreed that any funding-application prepared by the Watton-at-Stone Playground Working-Group should be made in the name of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council (instead of by the Community Hall), because it owns the land on which the play area is sited. To this end, and to clarify certain parts, it was agreed that the Terms of Reference (TOR) document be updated and signed by both parties without delay.

Mr. Stock to amend the TOR agreement accordingly and then e-mail it to all Parish Councillors for their approval, and explain the changes to Hannah Brownlow. **Action: D. Stock**

The Clerk to provide Hannah Brownlow (Watton-at-Stone Playground Working-Group) with the accounts and banking details they have requested. **Action: J. Allsop**

**e) Nigel Poulton – leave of absence**

Under the most difficult of circumstances, sadly, Parish Councillors have decided it is no longer in the best interest of all concerned to extend Nigel Poulton’s leave of absence. Accordingly, the Clerk to write to East Herts District Council informing the returning officer and Jeff Hughes of our decision. **Action: M. Smith**

**8 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>	
Mark & Anna Taylor - Allotment	<u>13.25</u>	CPRE - Annual subscription	29.00
	<b><u>13.25</u></b>		<b><u>29.00</u></b>
<b>Cheques issued</b>			
Salaries and Wages	May 2013		1256.09
Frank Cooper	April grass cutting		194.40
Bluebury contractors	Prepare and seed goal mouths		60.00
Bluebury contractors	Supply and spread fertiliser on sportsfield		96.00
Aon UK Ltd	Annual insurance premium		725.57
Mike Smith	Grass seed		<u>19.65</u>
			<b><u>2351.71</u></b>
<b>Cheques received</b>			
Asda	Donation towards play equipment funds		<u>50.00</u>
			<b><u>50.00</u></b>
<b>Watton-at-Stone Community Hall</b>			
<b>Petty Cash – Receipts</b>		<b>Petty Cash -Payments</b>	
Felicitas Dixon	14.00	Gary Smith – window cleaning	58.00
Sharon Ling – Pavilion	48.00	HCC – cleaning materials	<u>43.44</u>
Amelia Young – Pavilion	52.50		<b><u>101.44</u></b>
Suzanne Hankin - Main Hall and Pavilion	39.00		
Jim Keen – Main Hall	50.00		
Brendon McSherry - Pavilion	32.00		
Rhiannon Haines - Main Hall & Pavilion	<u>39.00</u>		
			<b><u>274.50</u></b>

**Cheques issued**

Wages	March 2013	446.50
Norris and fisher	Annual insurance premium	1297.89
1 <sup>st</sup> Call Signs	Sign for play area	93.60
Mark Blacktin	Repair brick wall	729.48
PRS for Music	Annual music licence	166.14
Blue Bury Contractors	Install lighting column	132.00
D. P Electrics	To connect lighting column to outside lighting	402.00
Mike Smith	Steel hoop installed adjacent to brick wall	85.95
		<b><u>3353.56</u></b>

**Cheques received**

Watton school	Pavilion hire for Dots and Tots	56.00
Shotokan karate	Main Hall	117.00
Felicitas Dixon	Pavilion hire	14.00
East Herts Council	Pavilion hire for election	128.00
Felicitas Dixon	Pavilion hire	14.00
		<b><u>329.00</u></b>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

• **Internal Audit of Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, including report from Jim Morrissey**

Mr. Filer read out Jim Morrissey’s internal audit report of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, which was e-mailed to all Parish Councillors on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

Mr. Filer said he had a meeting with Jim Morrissey, who said that it was his understanding that the Clerk’s housing allowance should not be subject to tax and NI. Subsequently, Mr. Filer looked on the HMRC website and found that the Clerk is able to received £18 of the housing allowance, tax and NI free. The remainder of the allowance will be subject to tax and NI.

• **Annual Return of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013**

Jim Morrissey completed and signed sections 1 and 4 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 (all Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the completed Annual Return).

Mr. Filer took the Parish Council through the annual governance statement and the standard questions were answered as follows.

<b>Section 2 – Annual governance statement</b>	
We acknowledge as members of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the ear ended 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010 that,	
1. We have approved the accounting statements, which have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and proper practices.	Yes
2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Yes
3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice which could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the council to conducts it business or on its finances.	Yes
4. We have provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ right in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes
5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Yes
6. We have maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems and carried out a review of its effectiveness.	Yes
7. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	Yes
8. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the council and, where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.	Yes

9. Trust funds (including charitable) – in our capacity as the sole managing trustee we have discharged our responsibility in relation to the accountability for the fund(s)/assets	N/A
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Mr. Filer proposed that the accounts, detailed in section one, and the Annual governance statement detailed in section two (listed above) of the Annual Return, be approved by the Parish Council and that the Chairman and the Clerk sign the Annual Return. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Smith and the Clerk duly signed the Annual Return and the Statement of Assurance.

The Clerk to return all relevant documentation to BDO by Wednesday 29th May 2013. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Financial reserves**

All Parish Councillors present at the meeting were issued with a revised page 3 copy of the Parish Council detailed end of year accounts. As well as the bank positions at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 of £3,524.16, the document also has the following breakdown added.

Money held in reserves	£1926.16
New homes bonus	<u>£1598.00</u>
Total	<u><b>£3524.16</b></u>

Mr. Filer said that the Parish Council reserves are very low. He therefore suggested that the Community Hall's annual grant is only paid by the Parish Council if sufficient funds are available at the end of the financial year. Parish Councillors agreed with this course of action.

- **CDA for herts**

The annual subscription for CDA for Herts is £30.

Parish Councillors agreed to renew the membership.

**Action: J. Allsop**

### Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Outside lighting**

The new lighting column has been connected to the outside lighting system at the Community Hall.

### Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Sportsfield maintenance**

Bluebury Contractors have grass seeded the goalmouths and fertiliser the sportsfield. Unfortunately, the goalmouths had to be re-seeded twice because there was a mix up about the date of final football match, which occurred after the first grass seeding work too place.

- **MPPA Surface**

Work to the MPPA surface is expected to begin in the next two to three weeks.

- **Floodlighting bulb replacement**

This work is outstanding.

- **Barbecues on the sportsfield**

Following a request from a hirer to have a barbecue adjacent to the Community Hall building, all Parish Councillors were e-mailed to ask their opinion on the matter. It was agreed that on this occasion we do not grant permission. The Parish Council has in the past given permission for barbecues on the sportsfield during fundraisers events.

After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed that each application to have a barbeque on the sportsfield should be treated on its own merits.

### Environment Sub-Committee

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

- **Allotments**

One of the allotment holders, who keeps an excellent allotment, has complained to Mrs. Dinnin about poor light on her plot due to overhanging branches and problems with weed seeds from adjoining overgrown plots.

Mr. Smith said that he had inspected the site and felt that it would be beneficial for the Parish Council to remove the tree as it will only cause more problems the larger it grows.

It was agreed to ask Adam Welch to provide a quote for cutting down the tree.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

Mrs. Dinnin has asked if Ted Brown could do some weed-killing in this area as Adam Welch does not like using weed-killers.

Mr. Meischke to ask Ted Brown to weed-kill a meter wide strip on the allotments. **Action: J. Meischke**

- **War Memorial Garden**

Mrs. Dinnin recently inspected the War Memorial garden. Adam Welch has cut back all the dead growth and the Holly bushes are just alive. However, this area does need weeding.

It was agreed that Mrs. Dinnin should instruct Adam Welch to do the gardening work as soon as possible.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Ornate Village sign**

Glyn Mould, who carved the Ornate village sign in 2004, e-mailed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May as follows

‘The sign looks pretty good. There is some weathering which could be sorted by some vigorous sanding and recoating with the yacht varnish. I have seen signs that have not been cared for and yours most definitely has!

I think it would be more cost effective if someone could apply a new coat or three of varnish and use clear silicone to fill any movement gaps.

I hope this is sound advice.’

It was agreed to ask Mark Lee (carpenter) to do the varnishing work. The Parish Council to provide the materials.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **River Beane Lammas Project**

Mr. Knight said that the open meeting to discuss the River Beane Lammas project was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Villagers first met on-site at the Lammas and were shown how baffles would be installed and the effect they would have on the river. They were also told how the notching of the wear at the old Mill site, would have a positive effect on the river flow. Charlie Bell agreed to consult with all residents whose gardens back onto the river Beane, along the length of the Lammas, regarding the installation of baffles in the river at the end of their gardens. They were reassured by Charlie Bell that nobody would be made to have a baffle if they did not want one.

The site meeting was followed up by a more formal meeting at the Community Hall. Overall there were some residents who were concerned about the proposed works, however the overall feeling was of increased interest in the River Beane and its habitat.

## b) 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 after the meeting.

### ii) Monthly village-report

Mrs. McCash completed the report on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May.

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

- **Play area** – some weeds.

Mr. Meischke to ask Ted Brown to spray the weeds.

**Action: J. Meischke**

- **Multi play** – safety surface in poor condition.

Mr. Meischke to inspect.

**Action: J. Meischke**

- **Allotments** – the access road onto the allotments needs strimming.

Mrs. Dinnin to inspect and take action as required.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Allotment** – three plots need cultivating.

Mrs. Dinnin to inspect and take action as required.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

- **War memorial garden** – some weeds and one of the bushes appears to be dead.

Mrs. Dinnin to inspect and take action as required.

**Action: C. Dinnin**

### iii) Weekly sportsfield

Ted Brown has found glass on the sportsfield on several occasions, including glass on the play area.

Mr. Meischke to ask Ted Brown to record the dates he finds glass on the sportsfield and play area and remove it from site.

**Action: J. Meischke**

### iv) Website

The following amendments to be uploaded to the Parish Council website.

- Registration of the Watton-at-Stone logo
- Name and contact details of the new Parish Rector
- Name and contact details of the new County Councillor
- Name and contact details of the new District Councillor

The Clerk to update these details accordingly.

**Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Meischke said that 80% to 90% of people he had spoken to in the village are under the impression that Rik Sharma has been elected as a new Parish Councillor and not as their new District Councillor.

v) **Website diary**

None.

vi) **Highway and Lighting faults**

Refer to item 5 c 16 - Write to Hertfordshire Highways re potholes in Hazeldell.

## 9 Correspondence received

### a) Letter from Bidwells re Diocesan land for additional tennis court

All Parish Councillors were e-mailed a copy of a letter, dated 12<sup>th</sup> April, from Mr. Alex Porter (Bidwells).

**'St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance - Watton-at-Stone Glebe**

You may recall that in March 2009, the Board agreed in principle to a lease of the land edged in orange on the enclosed plan to Watton-at-Stone Parish Council for the purpose of constructing a new tennis court. Bidwells have since taken over the management of the property from Rumball Sedgwick and it has come to our attention that this lease was never entered into.

The St. Albans Diocesan Board of Finance would like to know whether the Parish Council is still interested in a lease on this land or if this is something which is no longer an option.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything, please do not hesitate to contact me.'

Parish Councillors agreed, by e-mail, that they did wish to continue their interest in this land.

The Clerk said she had spoken to Alex Porter, who informed her that they are in the process of drawing up a new lease for the horses field. The current lease on this land includes the piece of land that the third tennis court would stand on. If the Parish Council had not shown a continuing interest, the land would have been included in the new lease for the horses field.

The current lease for the sportsfield extension, which includes the land that the MPPA stands on, expired in September 2011 and therefore is due for renewal.

### b) Letter from Bidwells re oak tree on Diocesan leased land on the sportsfield

Alex Porter (Bidwells) wrote on 16<sup>th</sup> April as follows,

You may recall that Watton-at-Stone Parish Council commissioned a survey of an English Oak tree on the part of the playing fields which they currently rent from the St. Albans Diocesan Board of Finance. The report for this was dated 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and was prepared by Dr. RJ M Wilson of C trees Ltd. Neither Bidwells nor the Diocese have any correspondence to confirm whether the suggested works have been carried out.

Could you please update me on this situation and if works have been carried out, please provide a copy of the invoice of the works so that it can be held on file for future reference.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything, please do not hesitate to contact me.'

A copy of C-trees revised tree report, together with the invoices relating to the work carried out on the Oak tree on the sportsfield, have been e-mailed to Alex Porter.

- **Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson re Parish Council land at Rivershill**

Mr. Meischke said that while he was away on holiday Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson put a letter through his door advising that they had accepted a quotation of £250 to clear their tree that had fallen onto Parish Council land at Rivershill and that the work was due to start on 13<sup>th</sup> May. The work is currently in the process of being done but some of the tree is quite embedded into the ground and will require vehicle access to the site to remove it.

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Taylor has started to remove the rubbish that his gardener dumped on Parish Council land.

Mr. Meischke to keep the Parish Council updated and this item will remain on the Parish Council agenda.

**Agenda: 06/13**

- **East Herts Council Annual playground inspection**

Ian Sharratt (Environmental Manager – Parks and Open Spaces) wrote on the 17<sup>th</sup> May advising us that the annual playground inspections in East Herts are due to take place in the final two weeks in June. The inspection includes an equipment risk assessment and a printed report and will cost £46.55 plus VAT.

Parish Councillors agreed that East Herts Council should be instructed to do the annual play playground inspection.

**Action: J. Allsop**

- **Stevenage Community Trust - Talk Talk volunteers**

Caroline Haskins from the Stevenage Community Trust, e-mailed today (21<sup>st</sup> May) as follows.

‘Talk Talk are looking for community projects that their staff can assist with from 9.30am – 1pm on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013. This will form part of their ‘Give Something Back’ day where staff spend the morning helping out in the community before returning to the office for fundraising events in the afternoon.

If you know of any suitable projects in your community for these volunteers, please contact me at your earliest convenience with brief details. I will forward all requests on to Talk Talk for them to decide which would be most appropriate.’

Mr. Meischke suggested that the Talk Talk volunteers could pressure wash the Community Hall changing rooms. It was agreed not to ask them to do any painting work in the Community Hall.

Mrs. Dinnin to be asked if she has any jobs within the village that the Talk Talk volunteers could do.

**Action: J. Allsop**

When identified, the Clerk to notify Caroline Haskins of the suggested jobs for Talk Talk volunteers.

**Action: J. Allsop**

## 10 Village organisations

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

Mr. Stock said that the War Memorial Hall Management Committee had switched from E-ON to Scottish Power and negotiated a contract which, based on current consumption, would save them approximately £600 per year on their electricity bills.

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

- **Watton Youth Drop Inn**

Mr. Meischke reported that there has been a large increase in Youth Club attendance.

The Police have visited the club and invited members to sit in their police vehicle.

The following Youth Club events have been arranged

- A trip to visit the Houses of Parliament
- A visit from a Fire engine
- A disco

Watton Youth Drop Inn now have their own Facebook page.

District Councillor Rik Sharma is seeing if he can obtain some funds to help with the running of the club.

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

- **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 Pre-School Playgroup:** Nothing to report.

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

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

## 11 Items for Parish News

The following item to be included in the June 2013 issue of the Parish News.

- Annual Parish reports and summarised accounts.

**Action: I. Knight/J. Allsop**

- **The meeting closed at 2122.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**