

Report and updates on items due to be discussed at meeting cancelled on Tuesday 17th March 2020

1. Apologies for absence

N/A

2. Public Participation

N/A

3. Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Due to Covid 19 restrictions it was agreed by e-mail that the March 2020 Parish Council meeting be cancelled and where possible essential decisions be made by e-mail / video link.

4. Declaration of Interests

N/A

5. Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 18th February 2020**

These minutes will require adopting at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

b) Review of actions

1. **Chase EHDC re ownership of Mill Lane dog bin & request for larger bin:** outstanding. J. Allsop

2. **Investigate lock on Great Innings notice board**

Cllr. Meischke will look at the lock.

J. Meischke/ J. Allsop

3. **Arrange Trustees meeting for April 2020**

Item on hold for the time being.

4. **Contact Woodhall Estate re Mill Lane site**

Cllr. Smith's e-mailed his report of 21st March.

"Under review of actions I was due and did meet Lindsay Holt at Woodhall re Mill Lane.

They assure me that they are committed to making Mill Lane available for recreation and in particular Football.

They would grant a lease similar to the arrangement with the scouts

They suggested that they would relocate some trees from the Jubilee plantation if it better helped the layout of pitches

I asked about funding the traffic surveys, but the response was that they needed more certainty about the development before they invested more into the project.

They wrote to the NP with querying certain criteria within the NP proposals and these were taken on board by the NP at their last meeting.

One concern they highlighted was the areas identified as local green spaces. In general, they have no wish to change the current use or look of the land, but such a designation would remove at a stroke their 'permitted development rights' rights which we all have as a matter of course.

My worry is that if that hand is overplayed, we may lose out elsewhere."

5. **Meet with Richard Wing (Scouts) about facilities re land at Mill Lane**

On hold

M. Smith / J. Meischke

c) Action points resolved

1. Write letter to planning department re Land adjacent to Gregorys Farm
2. Make amendments to Neighbourhood Plan's housing policy
3. E-mail County Cllr. Crofton our letter re footpaths dated August 2018
4. E-mail Parish Councillors Civic meeting dates for 2020/21
5. Upload amended documents to website
6. Contact decorating contractors
7. Renew cleaning contract with H D Cleaning Services
8. Inspect Woodhall estate sign re tree surgery and inform Parish Councillors
9. Obtain photographs of the problem areas around Grey House
10. Inspect and decide future of flowerbed outside the Grey house
11. Create a War Memorial management plan
12. Verify that the cost in the Grassroots quotation is to supply and lay' the gravel
13. Visit War Memorial site to review weeding problem
14. Inspect entrance of the allotment
15. Carry out emergency lighting and alarm tests

16. **Remove graffiti from Palace Fortress, Harry's bench and Mill Lane dog bin:** All completed.
17. Send Cllrs. Beanebytes e-mail re change in website legalisation
18. Obtain wording re high Street road closure for uploading to Facebook
19. E-mail EHDC re use of Mill Lane site for Watton Day Festival

6. Planning

a) Applications

i) 23 Rivershill (3/20/0435/HH)

Ground floor front extension and 2 Velux rooflights to front elevation

Cllr. Block visited the neighbours at 5 and 7 Moorymead Close and reported that they had no objections to the application. A 'No comment' response was agreed by Parish Councillors by e-mail and the Clerk notified EHDC accordingly. See decisions below.

b) Decisions

Decision notice received on 29th April 2020

- **23 Rivershill (3/20/0435/HH)**

Ground floor front extension and 2 Velux rooflights to front elevation - EHDC – permission granted

7. Specific items

a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

No report provided.

b) Neighbourhood plan and benefits Committee – progress report

The Steering Group cancelled their planned March meeting but held their April meeting over Zoom and agreed action points to continue the preparation of the draft neighbourhood plan.

Cllr. Waltham is working on putting together another grant application and the Steering Group will be having another meeting via zoom in June.

c) Traffic in the High Street

At the February Parish Council meeting Cllr. Jancey agreed to e-mail Sophie Bell asking to find out if she had had a response from Richard Cassidy re the monitoring and enforcing of parking restrictions in the High Street. Sophie Bell replied on 17th March stating that she had not had a response but had observed that it was the evening restrictions in particular that are not being adhered to and she would notify him accordingly. No further communication has been received. Cllr. Jancey to chase. **Action: K. Jancey**

d) Footpaths

At the February Parish Council meeting Cllr. Block agreed to re send County Cllr. Ken Crofton the letter sent to Ian Richardson (Highways BST) on 13th August 2018, listing some of the problems identified during their past combined walkabout to examine the state of various footpaths in the village.

Cllr. Block received the following e-mail from Cllr. Crofton on 17th March, which he then forwarded to all Parish Councillors.

“Thank you for your e-mail and copy of a letter written to highways on 15th August 2018. Subsequently to that I forwarded a draft copy to you of the intended scope of works in January 2019. Please see a further copy of the draft report. Nothing much has changed as the programme has not been finalised for '20 – '21 or the contractors appointed yet. Before the work commences surveyors will visit the locations and reassess the type of work needed due to the time lapse. I will not be expected to interfere with the engineering requirements, that will be left to the surveyors to work within the circa £77500 budget I have set them.

We will be notified in due course when a start date has been agreed.”

e) Civic meeting dates for year 2020/21

Due to the Covid-19 the civic meeting dates for year 2020/21 are yet to be confirmed.

f) Minute book binding

The Clerk to arrange for five-minute books to be bound as soon as restrictions re Covid-19 are lifted.

Action: J. Allsop

g) Action required re website confirming to new legislation

No progress has been made on this item which comes into force at the end of September 2020. The new legislation includes adding easy links for disabled people.

Beanebytes has investigated this and is waiting to discuss this further with Parish Councillors. This could be arranged without involving an actual meeting.

Cllr. Smith identified the Four Principles of Accessibility.

The W3C bases WCAG around four principles of accessibility. Web pages can use elements like alternative text and accessible PDFs to follow ADA compliance. Any web page or document that is not using accessibility practices to eliminate barriers for the four principles is considered inaccessible to people with disabilities.

The four principles are:

- **Perceivable:** The contents of the page must be detectable to everyone, no matter what their disability. They cannot be hidden from people who cannot see small print, for example.
- **Operable:** All users must be able to interact with the components of the page. A website must not provide buttons that can only be clicked by using a mouse, since some people with disabilities cannot use a mouse, and instead use a keyboard, voice control or some other interface.
- **Understandable:** All users must be able to understand the meaning of the information on the page, as well as the instructions for interacting with the page's components.
- **Robust:** No matter what a web page looks like or what it contains, it has to remain able to be used and understood on a wide variety of devices using a wide range of assistive technologies like screen readers.

Cllr. Smith to pursue this item with the Clerk.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

8. Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts - March 2020**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash –		Petty cash - Payments	
Kevin Storey -	67.50		
	67.25		
Payments			
Wages and Salaries	February 2020		1303.50
David Payne	Strimming and mowing		22.50
Adam Welch	Leaf clearance		210.00
Grassroots	Work at War Memorial		223.44
			1759.44
Receipts			
None			

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Niall Turner – 3 weeks - Main Hall	35.00	Flintloft Ironmongers - broom	16.85
Floodlighting donations to 28.01.20	197.00	Archery Company – equipment	44.70
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion hire	60.00	Philip Smith -travel expenses -table tennis	40.50
Sophie Hussain	40.00	Tony Silvestri – Yoga instruction	<u>50.00</u>
Sarah Endersbee – Main Hall & Pav	45.00		152.05
Felicitas Dixon– Main Hall & Pav	22.00		
Donation for toy use	5.00		
Cub Scouts	20.00		
Active East Herts	600.00		
	1024.00		
Payments			
Castle Water	Wastewater		20.75
B& Q	Paint and Materials		282.78
Wages	February 2020		395.36
E-on	Gas		321.16
Pozitive Energy	Electricity		122.94
HCC	Graffiti remover		7.80
HMRC	VAT return – January 2020		100.55
Mark Blacktin	Decoration work		<u>2,200.00</u>
Sports Courts UK Limited	Tennis court - Moss kill		462.00
			3,913.34

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council REPORT re cancelled meeting-03/20

Receipts		
Hannah Copley	Main Hall and Pavilion	63.00
Ben Talbot - Talbott Fitness	Toilet and changing room facilities	80.00
Sports and Social Club	QTR 4	386.25
EDHC	Pavilion hire for general election	153.60
Ildiko	Meeting room	120.00
Weight Watchers	Pavilion hire	140.00
Peter Khera (Shotokan Karate)	Main Hall	193.80
Paula Sutton	Main Hall	222.30
Watton House	Meeting room	10.00
Ben Talbot - Talbott Fitness	Toilet and changing room facilities	90.00
Abigail Frances Williams (Moo)	Pavilion hire	80.00
		1538.95

• **Monthly accounts - April 2020**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments	
None		BT – phone line package includes calls -28.01.20	27.63
		BT – phone line package includes calls - 28.02.20	26.46
		BT – phone line package includes calls - 28.03.20	26.90
			80.99
Payments			
Govresources		Neighbourhood Plan - consultation work	2,400.00
Rosemary Brown		32 hours litterpick at £8.88	284.16
Jane Allsop		March salary plus home and mobile phone	1,019.34
HMRC		NI re Clerk salary - October to December 2019	238.65
Bidwells		Rent for sportsfield extension	125.00
Frank Cooper & Son Ltd		Line Marking	126.00
David Payne		work at sportsfield	22.50
Frank Cooper & Son		Sportsfield grass cut	72.00
			4,287.65
Receipts			
HMRC		VAT rebate 03.2019-02.2020	5,518.01
SSC		Line marking donation	105.00
Philip Fifield		Allotment deposit	50.00
			5,673.01

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Floodlighting donations to 30.03.20	60.00	Philip Smith -Travel expenses table tennis	27.00
Active East Herts	344.00	JSM archery - Archery Tuition	60.00
	404.00	Ton Silvestri - Yoga instruction	50.00
			137.00
Payments			
Rosemary Brown		22 hours x £8.88	195.36
James Turner Limited		Work to boiler and showers	1756.80
Castle Water		Water	51.30
H D Cleaning Services		Cleaning hall in February 2020	250.00
Pozitive Energy		Electricity	87.42
P. J. Andrews		Final payment for low-level roof installation	3312.00
			5652.88
Receipts			
HMRC		VAT rebate for 02.2020	327.36
			327.36

The March and April 2020 accounts have been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors. No objections were received.

• **Appoint auditor for the Internal audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020**

The Clerk e-mailed all Parish Councillors on 24th April asking for their agreement to appoint Stuart McCash to perform the 2019/2020 internal audit. All Parish Councillors agreed the appointment, via e-mail.

• **Appoint auditor for the External audit of the Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020**

The Clerk e-mailed all Parish Councillors on 24th April asking for their agreement to appoint McCash and Hay to perform the 2019/2020 audit of the Community Hall accounts. All Parish Councillors agreed the appointment, via e-mail.

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke e-mailed the following notes on aborted Parish Council dated 17th March 2020.

- **Hall decoration**
All done and a good job, get councillors to look in the Hall, with particular attention to the skirting, because if it works, should we adopt this approach to the Pavilion?
This can be looked at when we next meet.
- **Cleaner's insurance and signed contract**
Contract signed but still waiting for insurance certificate to be redone in the correct name.
Cllr. Meischke to obtain insurance certificate. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Hall corridor picture boards**
Work is progressing, we now have 23 pictures for each board with a different split picture post card for each board. The size of the pictures and positions is now being worked on to see what works best.
This is a non-urgent item.
- **Replacement roof**
P. J. Andrews have fitted the replacement roof and their final invoice has been paid.
Cllr. Smith has obtained a quotation of £9,750 (including scaffold) plus VAT to do the high-level roof. A decision on doing this roof needs to be agreed before the guttering issue can be addressed.
- **Car Park & Replacement play equipment**
Cllr. Meischke is working on a map to show accurate lay out and numbers of cars possible, which he hoped to have ready for the next Parish Council meeting. These items are now on hold.
- **Fire Risk Document**
Cllr. Meischke has taken some time to run through this but would like someone else to look through whilst walking round the building just to make sure we do not need to update anything. This item is on hold.
- **Rewrite Hire Agreements for Sports Clubs**
Need to arrange a date for Cllrs. Knight and Meischke and minimum of one other Trustee to discuss.
This item is on hold.
- **Hire of Hall Cancellations**
The Community Hall building was closed on Tuesday 17th March to all hirers, apart from one hiring on Thursday 19th March.
The Clerk wrote to all regular hirers offering them a refund for the two weeks in March that they did not use the hall. All but one hirer asked that we use the money against any future bookings. The one hirer had £40 returned to them via bank transfer.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

- **Tennis court washing**
Sports Courts have completed Moss kill of double tennis courts.
The Tennis Courts have been locked due to Covid-19 and advice on the regulations on social distancing.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllrs. Dinnin and Stock have produced updates up to the beginning of May.

- **Pump slope**
Cllr. Dinnin saw Lindsey Holt and a man looking at the hedges at the rear of the properties in the High Street, to date nothing has been done.
- **Work around the Pump**
Further to a site meeting between the three parties, Adam Welch was asked by Cllrs. Dinnin and Stock to cut back overhanging branches and generally tidy up the area around the pump to make it tidier and easier to maintain. This work was funded from the money Adam would have received as part of his 3-year maintenance work on the War Memorial site (now the responsibility of Grassroots).
- **Allotments**
Since lockdown we have had several enquiries and applications for a plot. Cllr. Dinnin has now re-let all available plots and she is going down regularly and will get in touch with any allotment holders who seem to be not using their plots to see if they want to give them up.
Cllr. Dinnin said that the allotments are in the best condition she has seen!!
Yew tree in Kimberly garden still has not been cut properly - someone has cut a small branch off that was overhanging the footpath/driveway to the car parks at the end of the site.
Cllr. Dinnin has asked Adam Welch to cut the hedge along this entrance, as he usually does most years.
This has not yet been done.

- **War Memorial**

Further to his action point from the Parish Council meeting in February, Cllr. Stock wrote a War Memorial Management Plan to ensure that the site is kept in the best possible condition at any given time. After discussion, the content of the plan was agreed by Cllrs. Dinnin, Smith and Meischke and quotes were sort from Adam Welch (Greenwood Tree Care) and Ben Storey (Grassroots).

There was a substantial difference in the quotes received, with Grassroots being the lower of the two.

However, because Adam has just entered the final year of his current 3-year contract with us for the maintenance of the War Memorial and village flowerbeds, Cllrs. Stock and Dinnin met with him on 9 March to explain that due to the substantial difference in the quotes, we would be obliged to go with the lowest one. However, we would introduce a temporary contract-variance so that he would not lose out, i.e., he would be given other planned work to cover this third-year short-fall, e.g., the much needed clearance-work around the Village Pump to make that site-maintenance easier in the future.

Having approved the Management Plan, all members of the Environment Subcommittee agreed that this is the best and most cost-effective approach to adopt and the following recommendation was put (via e-mail) to the other members of the Parish Council.

- The War Memorial Plan is adopted by the PC
- We formally accept the Grassroots quote and ask that work starts with immediate effect.

The Parish Council agreed with these recommendations and Cllr. Stock contacted Grassroots accordingly.

Cllr. Stock proposed via e-mail, to all Parish Councillors, that:

- the Management Plan now be added to Parish Council section of our village website
- during the monthly village-reports, the state of the War Memorial site be checked against the Management Plan and any issues highlighted and resolved accordingly.

This was agreed and the Clerk was asked to add the Management Plan to the website and also to ensure that a copy is provided with the village-report check-list. **Action: J. Allsop**

The additional gravel has now been supplied and laid by Grassroots and the invoice paid. The site looks more uniform and much improved as a result.

Cllr. Stock noted that the encroachment under the boundary hedge and some under-shrub weeding appeared not to have been done. He therefore contacted Ben Storey (Grassroots) on 1 May to request that this be resolved.

b) Routine Reports

i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests

Cllr. Meischke is doing these checks periodically.

ii) Gas and electricity meter readings

Carried-out.

iii) Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests

Nothing to report.

iv) Monthly village-report

- **March 2020**

Cllr. Knight completed the report on 17th March 2020. Negative items only are highlighted.

- **Sportsfield** - goal mouths will need re-seeding.
- **Allotments** - large branches hanging over fence behind Chestnuts, needs clearing.

- **April 2020**

Cllr. Hammon completed the report on 25th April 2020, a copy of which has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors together with associated pictures. Cllr. Hammon did not inspect the salt bins or the dog bins in Great Innings and on the Walkern Road.

- **Sportsfield fence** - on the far side of the sports field by the bike ramps needs repairing. There is a series of sections with bits missing and tape across. Picture provided.
- **Play area** - a couple of people have mentioned the deteriorating surface and flooding under the supernova ring and the junior climbing frame. At the moment, it's bone dry and a good sweep of the two patches would reveal whether the surface is damaged or there's just a build-up of mud etc.
- **Tennis Courts** (locked) - there are weeds growing along the tramlines of the near court in Court A. Also, the sign for Court A has fallen off and there is a red ant nest underneath where it has fallen (which I forgot to add on the attached actual report).

Cllr. Meischke to inspect and ask David Payne to weed kill.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Path up to the tennis courts** - some of the paving stones are cracked and uneven - a possible trip hazard?

Cllr. Meischke to inspect.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Mill Lane** - there is an extra very full wheelie bin near the scout hut - possible fly tipping?

The Clerk contacted EHDC asking them to remove the wheelie bin when they empty the adjacent litterbin. Cllr. Block later confirmed that the wheelie bin had been removed.

- **Mill Lane culvert** - there are a few bricks missing on the top of the arch - not sure if this is new but perhaps something to keep an eye on.

The Clerk e-mailed HCC asking them to inspect.

The following response was received on 7th May.

“Thank you for your email and photograph.

The structure referenced is HCC number: 0420 and I can confirm that our inspectors have visited this site 06/05/2020. All of the structures maintained by HCC are inspected on a biennial cycle and the next general inspection for this structure is due November of this year. We will continue to monitor the brick loss during these inspections.

For any further bridges and structure related enquiries you can contact the team directly at highway.structures@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Kind regards, Nick Sadowsky (Technician | Bridges and Structures | Environment & Infrastructure

Hertfordshire County Council).”

- **Station Rd** opposite the doctors (where there was a small camp last year), it looks as if some of the trees may have fallen/been pushed down towards the road. Picture provided.

The Clerk e-mailed EHDC asking them to inspect and clear any fallen branches.

Cllr. Dinnin to inspect the site.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Station Rd** - the grass on the Hazeldell side of Station Rd is really in a dreadful state in a lot of places and has been ripped up and ruined by the road/gas works. Instead of grass and daisies, there's just bare dusty earth and a few weeds. Should we put in an objection to Highways now, while they're still working?

Cllr. Dinnin suggested that we wait until the work is completed on Station Road before contacting HCC.

v) **Weekly sportsfield**

Nothing to report.

vi) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Nothing to report.

vii) **Website/Facebook**

Refer to 8 b ix, Dog fouling report.

viii) **Highway and Lighting faults**

Nothing to report.

ix) **Dog fouling reports**

The Clerk noted that there have been lots of complaints on Facebook about dog fouling around the village and in the fields. People are throwing rubbish into the Abel Smith fenced off land from their picnics and dog waste bags. They are also throwing them around the field perimeter and hanging filled dog waste bags on branches.

Cllr. Smith has written an article which has been uploaded to Facebook and our website.

x) **Police reports**

No report provided by the Police.

9. Correspondence received

a) E-mail re HCC's adoption of Clappers Lane

Ken Crofton forwarded the following e-mail dated 3rd March from Messaoud Zeglache (Development Management Implementation at HCC)

“I have attached for your information the S38 agreement layout showing the spine road called Clappers Lane to be offered for adoption. Unfortunately, the roads Gatekeeper Way, Stoney Fields and Gresley Close are not offered for adoption and these roads will be maintained by the developer.

In short, Clappers Lane spine road with footpath on both sides, and lighting will be fully adopted by HCC.”

A map highlighting the area was attached to the e-mail. A copy of this e-mail was sent to all Parish Councillors on 4th May.

b) E-mail from Vic Sell of Beane Cottage re replacement fencing

Part of Vic Sell's wooden fence on Parish Council land at Walkern Road fell down during strong winds. He has asked if he can replace it with something slightly different. All Parish Councillors were sent a copy of his e-mail and no objections were received. The Clerk has informed Mr. Sell that he can install new fencing.

The Parish Council's agreement with Vic Sell needs to be renewed by 1st August 2020. This item to be placed on the next Parish Council agenda.

Next Agenda

10. Village organisations

No reports provided.

11. Items for Parish News

None.

End of Report - dated 10th May 2020.