

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 27th July 2021

Present:	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr. Kay Jancey
	Cllr. David Stock	Clerk: Jane Allsop
Public:	None	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Catherine Hammon, Cllr. Helen McCash and Cllr. Emma Waltham.

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 22nd June 2021**

Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1 Speed indicator signs (SID)

Cllr. Smith said that he contacted County Cllr. Ken Crofton about speed signs and was given the contact detail of Mr. Ian Richardson from the Herts. Highways and a video conference was arranged

The proposal is to purchase one speed sign and install two SID sockets, one in Station Road and the other in-between the War Memorial and Rivershill section of the High Street. This would give the village 4 sockets and two signs that could be moved from time to time because drivers, over time, start ignore speed warning signs.

Highways are proposing to visit the village to assess if the sites are suitable and technically within the speed limits before the Parish Council take the matter further.

Cllr. Smith said a new speed indicator and installation of an electrical socket would cost around £5,100. The indicator would also store speed data on it. However, to access the data the Parish Council would need to pay to have the sign moved and data read (£500). The cost of a sign without storage on it would be £4,700 and the installation of an electrical socket around £390.

Cllr. Smith said he contacted the speed sign manufactures and they told him that a smiley face sign, similar in style to the one we already have in the village, would cost around £1,800.

During the Team meeting, Cllrs. Smith and Meischke also discussed their concerns about the proposals to develop the land off Walkern Road and associated road safety along the Walkern Road to High Street area. Mr. Richardson agreed to look at the plans in detail when the development stages come and will take safety in this area very seriously.

Cllr. Meischke suggested that when Highway's report back again re the A602 work, he could ask them to fund the new speed signs as a compensation for all the disruption they have caused to the village.

c) Action points resolved

1. Install frameless notice boards in two of the Parish Council external notice boards
2. E-mail completed Annual Return and relevant documentation to PKF Littlejohn
3. **Check to see if Nick Fox (Woodhall Estate) has removed fallen Cracked Willow branch**
Cllr. Dinnin said that she could not inspect the site to see if the fallen branch had been removed because the area is covered in nettles.
4. Write to EHDC re planning applications
5. E-mail the Woodhall Estate requesting that any overgrown hedges are cut back
6. E-mail Cllr. Bell re hedges along the Hockerill footpath that runs parallel with Station Road
7. Chase Cllr. Bell for a response for a response re parking issues in Rectory Lane
8. Consider adding additional parking in Rectory Lane to NP list of gains
9. Renew CPRE annual subscription
10. Produce plan & article to go on Facebook, website, and notice boards re car park and play area upgrades
11. Proceed with planning application for change of use on part of the sportsfield
12. E-mail tenants who have not been attending to their plots
13. E-mail Frank Cooper & Son about fortnightly grass cutting requirements

14. Inspect damaged seat on sportsfield and organise any temporary repair work
15. Inspect War Memorial Garden and contact Grassroots if work is required
16. Ask Adam Welch to cut back overgrowth by gate in Church field that lead to the allotments
17. Ask Tony Bradford for the name of the footpath officer
18. Contact EHDC re litterbin emptying
19. **Give the Clerk the telephone number on the side of the Air Ambulance clothes bin**
Cllr. Dinnin said that there are no phone numbers on the side of the Air Ambulance recycle bin.
Cllr. Meischke said that he has a number for the Air Ambulance and if he is told that the bin is full then he can arrange for it to be emptied.
20. Contact EHDC re break-in at Mill Lane site
21. Report condition of road between Watton-at-Stone and Hooks Cross
22. Forward Cllr. Bell e-mail re overgrown trees on Hockerill
23. Contact Alan Headland re John Waring memorial seat

6. Planning

a) Applications

The following planning application was dealt with via e-mail and letters put through the doors of residents as and when required.

i) **8 Beane Road (3/21/1608/HH)**

First floor rear extension, single storey side extension under the car port and alterations to front porch roof

The Parish Council agreed no comment response and the planning department were notified accordingly.

ii) **18 Lammas Road (3/21/1696/HH)**

Single storey front extension

The Parish Council agreed the following response. "The Parish Council does not object to the development in principle, providing that the parking space is deemed adequate under EHDC's Vehicle Parking Standards."

The planning department were notified accordingly.

iii) **60 Hazeldell (3/21/1712/HH)**

Single storey front & rear extensions with skylights

The Parish Council agreed no comment response and the planning department were notified accordingly.

iv) **23 Moorymead Close (3/21/1798/HH)**

Garage conversion, replace garage door with front window, new front roof window opening in pitched roof, enlarged ground floor front window and alterations to rear fenestration

The Parish Council agreed no comment response and the planning department were notified accordingly.

b) Decisions

The following planning decision was received after the agenda was published.

• **14 Hazeldell (3/21/1556/PNHH)**

Single storey rear extension: Depth 4.30 metres, maximum height 3.45 metres. Eaves height 3.00 metres
-EHDC permission refused

Reasons for refusal: "The application does not demonstrate that the proposal would fall under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015."

7. Reports

a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

District Cllr. Bell did not provide a report for this meeting.

b) Neighbourhood plan and Benefits Committee – progress reports

Cllr. Waltham provided the following report.

"The NP are waiting for the result of the SEA (Strategic Environment Assessment) scoping report, which is in progress and is expected to arrive in August."

Cllr. Smith said that the only hope for including a bridge over the River Beane is if the assessment shows that the river is wrongly classified and would therefore remove the Environment Agency's objections. If they are unsuccessful then the NP's plans for a circular village walk will not happen.

c) Footpaths

Cllrs. Stock and Block had nothing to report.

This item to be removed from the agenda until further footpath updates are available.

d) Sports and Social Club

Cllr. Meischke said this item remains on the agenda as a reminder and has been delayed due to Covid restrictions. He said he would get into discussion with Cllr. Knight in the near future.

This item to remain on the agenda.

Agenda: 09/2021

e) A602 improvement scheme

Cllr. Meischke did not have anything to report, other than to remind Parish Councillors that the A602 will be shut again from 28th July to Sunday 15th August, when the Ware Road, between roundabout and Watton House, will be closed 24 hours a day.

f) Parking issues in Rectory Lane

District Cllr. Bell was not at the meeting to update Parish Councillors on this item.

Cllr. Hammon to confirm if this item has been added to the NP list of gains.

Action: C. Hammon

g) Trees on the Hockerill slope

Cllrs Smith, Dinnin and the Clerk, met today with Joel Piacentini (EHDC, Enforcement and Inspection Officer), to discuss the three Maple trees on the Hockerill slope.

Mr. Piacentini has agreed to put in a request for the urgent cutting of the hedge between the Hockerill footpath and Station Road.

He said that EHDC would not be interested in the removal of any of the three Maple trees, which all appear to be in very healthy condition. As this section of footpath is in the ownership of EHDC, he agreed to recommend that the footpath is resurfaced to remove the unevenness caused by the roots of these very large trees. He also said that technically EHDC are responsible for clearing any leaves on the pump slope and he would arrange for the path to be swept as there is currently debris on it.

The resident who complained about the Maple trees overhanging their garden, can cut any overhanging branches vertically, however they must not climb the tree to do so.

It was agreed to ask Adam Welch to keep an eye out for fallen leaves on the pump slope and clear them as and when required. The Parish Council to consider asking EHDC to contribute towards the cost.

Cllr. Dinnin said that the Woodhall Estate appear to have cut all the hedges belonging to the estate that are at the back of the properties on the High Street. i.e., from 78- 96 High Street.

h) Memorial seat in memory of John Waring

Cllr. Smith reported that he had met with Alan Headland about the siting of the John Waring memorial seat. The original request was to site the seat adjacent to the Nigel Poulton seat, however in doing so it would prevent the mower from cutting the grass at the back of the seat.

Cllr. Smith suggested an alternative location at the top of the sportsfield and this was accepted. He said if the seat is located about 6 meters from the boundary, it will allow the mower to cut the grass at the back of the seat. The Clerk confirmed that she has forwarded details of the Glasdon UK Limited recycled seats to Alan Headland.

8. Reports**a) Sub-Committees****Budget & Finance**

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash –		Petty cash - Payments
None		Velcro pads 4.99
		4.99
Payments		
Wages and salaries	June/July 2021	1,685.63
HMRC	Tax & NI	252.86
Bidwells	Allotment rent - six months	381.34
CPRE	Annual subscription	36.00
J. Hart	Work to entrance of Allotments	2,892.00
Ian Knight	Knudge Ltd - tennis court signs	39.60
British Telecom	Phone charges - April to June	69.91
Adam Welch	½ season strimming and mowing maintenance work	1,450.00
Frank Cooper & Son	Sportsfield grass cutting on 4, 24th June 2021	148.80
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – June 2021	48.00
Frank Cooper & Son	Grass cutting in and around the sportsfield	162.00
Concord Trophies	1 keep sake trophy + engraving, plus engrave 1 perpetual trophy	24.40
		7,190.54
Receipts		
Nationwide	Interest	16.80
Santander	Interest	0.21
Youth Club	Closing of account and funds to be held in reserve by the PC	2415.44
Sports and Social	Donation towards football pitch line marking	105.00
		2537.45

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Floodlighting donations to 26/4	52.00	None
Archery – Main Hall	110.00	
Table tennis/Bowls – Main Hall	236.00	
	398.00	

Payments		
Wages	June/July 2021	710.00
Herts Fire Protection	Annual fire equipment inspection	90.90
James Turner Limited	Repair to outside toilets	193.21
British gas	Electricity	53.90
East Herts Council	Rates	54.44
HCC Debtors	Air freshener	33.42
British gas	Gas	26.52
		1162.39
Receipts		
HMRC	VAT rebate for	81.77
Santander	Bank interest	0.08
Talbott Fitness	Use of toilet and changing room facilities	70.00
		151.85

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

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

Cllr. Block identified that the main items in the accounts are:

- **The Parish Council**

Expenditure:

Work to the entrance of the allotments	£2,410.00
Insurance	£1,406.28

Income:

Precept	£18,582.50
---------	------------

- **The Community Hall**

Expenditure:

Maintenance	£506.15
Decorating	£770.00

Income:

Hire of Main Hall	£1,186.09
Hire of Pavilion	£337.16

- **3-monthly inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts**

Cllr. McCash carried-out the three-month inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts on 27th July and they were in good order.

A copy of Cllr. McCash's reports is included in the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts for 2021/222.

- **Subscription to Parish Online – digital mapping for local councils**

In September 2019, at the request of the Neighbourhood Plan group, the Parish Council signed up for Parish Online's digital mapping at a cost of £150 plus VAT. This was renewed again last year (2020) for the same cost.

Cllr. Waltham had confirmed via e-mail that the Neighbourhood Plan group would like this renewed for at least another year. The renewal price is currently unknown.

Cllr. Smith said that this is a useful facility, and he had recently used the mapping service to produce a map of the car park and play area.

Parish Councillors agreed to renew the subscription to Parish online.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Outside toilets grant**

Cllr. Meischke said that the Trustees had tried to apply for a EHDC grant towards the cost of keeping the outside toilets open during Covid lock down but were unsuccessful.

- **Gardening contractor**

Cllr. Meischke said he was disappointed with the additional work Frank Cooper & Son (Coopers) have been contracted to do on the sportsfield. The garden area by the Community Hall has not been cut back nor has the grass area by the wall, although it was agreed that the latter currently looked more like a small meadow with wildflowers in among the grass. It was agreed to consider keeping this grassed area as more of a wildlife area. Cllr. Meischke said he had tried to speak to Shaun from Coopers, who deals with the contracts, and had left messages with their receptionist, but he had never called back. The Clerk suggested he speak to Helen, who had always chased up any problems.

Action: J. Meischke

Cllr. Meischke said that weeds are growing up around the bottom of the wall between on the lane side.

Cllr. Dinnin said that everything outside the hedge and wall are the responsibility of Adam Welch, and she will get him to apply weedkiller in the areas required.

Action: C. Dinnin

Cllr. Jancey said that there were weeds growing up around the BT box, which she has now removed.

Cllr. Meischke said that this happens on a regular basis and if you take a spade to the bottom of the weeds they are easily removed.

• **Play area & Car Park**

Further to the previous meeting, and to gauge opinion, details of the proposed changes to the play area and the extension to the car parking facility at the Community Hall were publicised on Facebook and our website, together with a number of posters displayed within the village.

Cllr. Meischke reported that no adverse comments had been received and this was also the case with those Parish Councilors present. He had also visited the play area to see if any of the parents present had any adverse comments to make about the proposed extension to the car park and none were received.

The proposals were again discussed in the light of this, and the e-mails received from the three Parish Councilors not present at the meeting, i.e., Cllr. McCash was in favour of the proposals, Cllr. Waltham objected strongly to the proposals and Cllr. Hammon approved the proposals in principle but subject to further scrutiny re the design of the car park. It was agreed that the opinion of Mehron Kirk (Neighbourhood Plan advisor) be sought.

A file is to be kept as a record of the e-mail exchanges between Parish Councilors on this subject prior to this meeting. **Action J Allsop**

- The car park proposal in principle was motioned and unanimously supported by those present.

Cllr. Smith also to investigate aspects concerning a planning application.

Action: M. Smith

Contractual cost £24,000

Note:

Since the meeting, Cllr. Smith contacted Edward Evans, planning officer at EHDC (on the 5 August) Mr. Evans confirmed that a full application could be made online. He went on to say that they would consider the application, almost certainly consulting Herts Highways, and if further information was required, they would be in contact with us.

- Separately, but in conjunction with the above, to approve the remodelling of the play area to include new equipment and associated surfaces with extended picnic facilities.

All Parish Councilors present approved the remodelling of the play area scheme.

As previously stated, Cllr. McCash and Hammon e-mailed their acceptance of the project.

Cllr. Meischke to accept Wicksteed Leisure’s quotation for the work required.

Action: J. Meischke

Contractual cost £20,000

- To construct two new accessible entrances to better serve the play area and Tennis courts.

All Parish Councilors present were in favour of the two new accessible entrances. Cllr. McCash confirmed via e-mail her acceptance.

Cllr. Meischke to accept Grassroots quotation for the work required.

Action: J. Meischke

Cllr. Meischke said that work to the entrance near the tennis courts will need to be completed before work on the play area can begin.

Contractual cost £6000



Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight had nothing to report.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

Cllr. Dinnin said that there is a rat problem on the allotments. Cllr. Smith met with Fred Burnell, and he quoted a price of £180 to blitz the area over the next month. Parish Councillors agreed to formally accept Mr. Burnell's quotation of £180.

Cllr. Dinnin said that she had been down to the allotments today and was told that Fred Burnell has deployed bait stations.

Fred Burnell also quoted a contract price of £480 per annum to make 10 visits with regular reports. It was agreed to wait for the outcome of the blitzing before agreeing to embark on a yearly contract.

The cost of any vermin treatment will need to be included in the annual allotment rent.

John Love used to deal with the rat problem and Cllr. Dinnin said she had located the container on plot 29 in which he used to keep the bait etc.in. She now needs to obtain the keys from the Allotment Association to see if any of the contents can be used by Fred Burnell.

Cllr. Dinnin said that there are two vacant plots with no one on the waiting list. She thought there would be several more allotments given up this September due to ill health.

Some progress has been made on the overgrown plots, one has been cleared, one given up and will now need strimming using their deposit and Adam Welch has quoted £80 for doing this work.

Cllr. Dinnin said she had received an e-mail from Carole Moore (Chair of the Allotment and Garden Association) who said that they are prepared to assist in clearance work on the allotments. They have invited her to attend their regular meetings and Cllr. Jancey said that they might also agree to help with the rat trapping too.

Cllr. Dinnin to reply to Carole Moore's e-mail to say that she would be happy to attend meetings and discuss items raised in her e-mail.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Grass and Hedges**

Jeff Skidmore Contractors cut the grass on the Lammas and Watton Green yesterday (Monday 26th July).

Two areas of the Lammas have been left uncut. Cllr. Smith said that he would inspect the areas, but it may be strimming work that the contractors are coming back to complete.

Action: M. Smith

The Church Walk and sportsfield hedges will be cut in late Summer. Adam Welch has recently trimmed back the overgrowth along School Lane.

The Clerk said that the elder bush on the corner of the sportsfield hedge along School Lane, by the footpath to the Community Hall main entrance, obscures visibility to drivers who come down School Lane. She said that a friend who lives in School Lane is concerned that she will not see a child exiting the footpath. It causes an additional problem because it grows much faster than the other hedging plants along this stretch.

Cllrs. Smith and Dinnin agreed to inspect the elder bush with a view to it being removed when the hedge is cut back.

Action: M. Smith/C. Dinnin

b) Routine Reports

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

Cllr. Meischke and Cllr. Block will do the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests tomorrow.

Action: J. Meischke/S. Block

Cllr. Meischke continues to inspect the hall regularly including running the water every 2-3 days to prevent the risk of legionnaires disease.

- ii) **Gas and electricity meter readings**

Cllr. Meischke gives the Clerk gas and electricity meter readings at the end of each month, and she uploads these readings to the providers websites.

- iii) **Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests**

Done.

- iv) **Monthly village-report**

Cllr. Block completed the report on 21st July 2021. A copy of his report has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors.

- **Sportsfield:** good some wear and tear.
- **Play Area:**
 - Safety surface – worn in places.
 - Wear on large swing seats.
 - Rainbow multi-play and slide – wear and tear to wood.
 - Toddler area – crazy daisy – top missing.

- **Community Hall**
 - Good. toilet and storeroom doors need painting.
 - General – an item of clothing on roof.
- **Tennis courts:**
 - Surface: some cracks.
 - Boundary fencing: lots of weeds/grass.
 - Tennis nets – small hole in one of the nets.
- **Allotments:**
 - Access – getting overgrown again.
 - Culverts – very overgrown.
- **War memorial:** one or two weeks in the gravel buy otherwise looking very good.

v) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

vi) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

Cllr. Block confirmed that the defibrillator was in working order when he inspected it.

Cllr. Hammon does weekly regular checks.

vii) **Website/Facebook**

None.

viii) **Highway issues**

The condition of road between Watton-at-Stone and Hooks Cross remains in a very bad state.

ix) **Dog fouling reports**

None.

x) **Police reports**

None.

9. Correspondence received

None.

10. Village organisations

- **War Memorial Management Committee**

Cllr. Stock said he attended a recent meeting of the War Memorial Management Committee.

They are currently in a good financial position. However, they have lost their main hirer, Georgie Paye, who ran bally classes at the hall. They are now going to embark on an advertising campaign to increase their lettings.

11. Items for Parish News

No items were identified for inclusion in the September issue of the Parish News. There is no issue distributed in August.

The meeting closed at 2130.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 21st September 2021.