

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 16th November 2021

Present:	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Stephen Block	Cllr. Christine Dinnin
	Cllr. Catherine Hammon (after 20.05)	
	Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr. Helen McCash
	Cllr. David Stock	Cllr. Emma Waltham
	District Cllr. Sophie Bell	Clerk: Jane Allsop

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllr. Kay Jancey.

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 19th October 2021**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1. **Confirm that improving parking in Rectory Lane has been added to the Neighbourhood Plan gains list**
Cllr. Smith said that this item was raised at the most recent Neighbourhood Plan meeting. It was agreed at that meeting not to add this to the gains list as there will be a lot of red tape between EHDC and HCC to try and get any additional parking in this area.

Cllr. Hammon arrived at the meeting.

Cllr. Meischke said that he would like this item to be put on a future Parish Council agenda because people are continuing to park on the grassed area in Rectory Lane. This was backed up by other Parish Councillors. It was agreed to put this item on the Parish Council agenda for approximately nine months' time (July/September 2022), or earlier if required. In the meantime, Parish Councillors will monitor the situation.

Agenda: 07/2022

2. **Give details of odd job man to Cllr. Dinnin**

Cllr. McCash confirmed she has given Cllr. Dinnin the contact details of the odd job man.

3. **Chase Clarion Housing re overgrown hedge at Glebe Court**

The Clerk said she had chased Clarion Housing twice and received one call from them. They informed her that the hedge heights are due to be lowered during the next four months. She pointed out to them that the current issue is not the height of the hedge but its width, which is restricting access onto the allotments.

The Clerk e-mailed District Cllr. Sophie Bell on 6th November asking her to help in this matter.

Cllr. Bell said that she had e-mailed Clarion but had no response. She had today phoned Clarion, but the person she needs to speak to is away on leave until Monday 22nd November and she will contact them then.

Action: S. Bell

4. **Give Cllr. Block items to be included in 2022/23 budget**

Cllr. Block said he had received budget quotations from both Cllr. Knight and the Clerk.

Cllr. Dinnin agreed to give Cllr. Block her budget requirements for 2022/23.

Action: C. Dinnin

5. **Replace the wooden steps on the rainbow multi-play and slide play equipment**

Cllr. Smith has replaced the most damaged log step and will arrange to replace the remaining steps in the next couple of weeks.

Action: M. Smith

6. **Investigate options for handrail on new entrance to sportsfield**

Cllr. Smith said that it will cost in the region of £200 to purchase two handrails for the new entrance between Church Walk and the sportsfield.

Parish Councillors agreed that the two handrails be purchased and fitted. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**

7. **Take action to resolve trip hazard where paving slabs on old footpath were removed**

Cllr. Smith said that youngsters running around are breaking down the edges of the old pathway. Cllr. Knight repeated his concern that this was a trip hazard as people are still tending to use the old route to exit the sportsfield. It was agreed to monitor the area, but no action will be taken at this time.

Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke

c) Action points resolved

1. Give Cllr. Meischke Sports & Social Club usage for first two quarters of this year
2. Make a recommendation for Sports & Social Club hire charges for first two quarters of this year
3. **Speak to A602 team re Village gateway, dog bin and speed signs**
Cllr. Meischke said he was given an option for two zoom meetings dates, agreed on one but have not has this confirmed yet.
4. Write to planning department re 31 Station Road
5. Ask Glasdon if they can provide bin outers only and the cost
6. Ask Cllr. McCash to clarify issues concerning bench with Mrs Haslam
7. Inform Rotary Club of permission to use mobile floodlights
8. Arrange Trustees meeting
9. Obtain estimates for resurfacing the double tennis courts
10. Investigate option of a carpet type surfaces for the tennis court
11. Order two sets of boot brushes
12. Show prospective allotment holders the vacant plots
13. Speak to Adam Welch and High Street property owners re cutting back overgrown allotment entrance
14. **Contact Jeff Skidmore Contractors re outstanding grass cutting works**
This item to be discussed under 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.
15. Conduct emergency escape lighting test and manual alarm call tests
16. Inspect play area re items raised by Cllr. Jancey in her monthly village-report
17. Ask Wicksteed Leisure to dispose of bike ramps when they do play area upgrades
18. Inspect wire fencing between courts A and B
19. Purchase light pull cord for Community Hall toilets
20. **Determine which first aid refill kit needs to be purchased and seek the Trustees approval**
Cllr. Jancey was not at the meeting to report on this item. this item to be placed on the December agenda.
Agenda: 12/2021
21. Arrange for the removal of the High Street North bench near the notice board
22. Fit new defibrillator pads
23. **Place notice on Facebook to gauges interest in running a first aid course**
A notice was placed on Facebook on 8th November. To date, sixteen people have declared an interest in attending a first aid course. This item to be placed on the January 2022 agenda.
Agenda 01/2022

6. Planning**a) Applications**

Cllr. Smith reported on the following planning application, which he had e-mailed to all Parish Councillors prior to the meeting.

i) 20 High Street (3/21/2690/HH)

Alterations to the front elevation to convert the existing hip roof to a gable roof with new window to front first floor

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

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

• Blue Hill Villa, Walkern Road (3/21/2828/HH)

Single Storey side extension

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions**i) 5 Watton House (3/21/1913/FUL)**

Proposed roof terrace with access hatch and external guarding

- EHDC permission refused

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

• 31 Station Road (3/21/2426/HH)

Single Storey rear extension

- EHDC permission granted

7. Reports

a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

District Cllr. Sophie Bell said that there has been an increase in drink spiking in Hertford with reports of needle spiking too. She suggested that something could be put on Watton-at-Stone's social media pages. Cllr. Meischke said that his daughter had recently chaired a meeting on this topic at St. Andrew's university in Scotland and he would ask her for some appropriate wording, which he would forward to Cllr. Bell.

Action: J. Meischke

Cllr. Bell said that one of the housing associations who have properties in the village are not attending to repairs and tenants are waiting significant times to have problems resolved. The District Council has now stepped in, asking the housing association to sort these problems. This usually resolves the problem quite quickly. Cllr. Bell said that there are five different housing associations who manage the rental and repair of properties in the village.

b) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

The Strategic environmental assessment found that the Neighbourhood Plan would have minor negative effects on flood risk.

This means we can now proceed to the next stage. We expect that the Regulation 14 consultation will run from January to March.

c) Trimming back of trees and hedging along Hockerill footpath that runs parallel with Station Road

This work is outstanding.

The Parish Council have not heard from Joel Piacentini (EHDC, Enforcement and Inspection Officer), about the resurfacing of the uneven footpath on the Hockerill slope.

Both items to remain on the agenda until this matter has been resolved.

Agenda: 12/2021

d) Memorial seats

The Clerk contacted Alan Headland about the John Waring seat and was informed that the Cycling Club have almost raised enough funds and hope to be able to order the bench in the next couple of months.

The Andrew Dalrymple seat will be ordered at the same time as the John Waring seat. **Agenda: 12/2021**

e) Speed sign for the southern end of the village

Cllr. Smith said that he and Cllr. Meischke attended a Teams meeting on Tuesday 26th October with Ian Hollinrake (Lead Assistant Highway Manager, East Herts District).

Cllr. Smith subsequently e-mailed all Parish Councillors with questions he had sent to Mr. Hollinrake. See list of questions below and Mr. Hollinrake's responses.

1. One socket, one SID and 5 years warranty £5100?

Correct for 2021 2022. Price may increase for the 2022 2023 Financial Year

2. Extra socket £590 - As above

3. Moving a SID between sockets £675 including data reset? – As above

4. Extended warranty - £1000 for 5 years?

Once the initial five-year Warrantee (or Commuted Sum) has expired an additional £1000 is payable to extend this by another five years. This may be payable from the Members HLB Budget as is the case at the moment but may possibly change in future years if the Sign(s) were originally Parish funded. Should this sum not be paid then if the SID becomes damaged or ceases working then HCC may remove it and any replacement would need to be funded at source (SID Only currently £4510).

5. To guarantee supply this financial year you would need notice by 30/11/2021?

Correct, our last Window for Ordering for Delivery during 2021 2022 is the 31st December, but some time in advance of that is needed to agree exact locations, probably by means of a site meeting etc.

6. Just for clarity you talked insurance, I guess you meant warranty against malfunction and not insurance against damage malicious or otherwise? Whose responsibility would that be?

The initial £5,100 covers all eventualities of repair or replacement (i.e. malfunction, accidental damage and malicious damage). To avoid, or reduce the risk of the later, is why we require the Parish Council to Consult with Residents who's properties are near the proposed location of the SID, and to provide HCC with evidence of the Consultation and a Satisfactory Response from Residents.

7. An option for us might be two new sockets and move the current SID every 9 months say?

We usually undertake SID work in two batches a year, first window of work closing at the end of June for delivery on site by the end of September, second window closing at the end of December, delivery on site by the end of March. So a once a year move may be the best advised option on this basis.

8. Another thought was to place in the vacant sockets a variety of " Speed Warning " signs so there would always be a reminder within the limited area?

Unlikely that such measures would be approved, as all Signs on the Highway need to adhere to the Traffic Sign Regulations.

Cllr. Smith suggested that the least the Parish Council might do is to purchase a socket and move the existing speed sign if we cannot get any funding from either the A602 Highways project, police fund or another funding source. Parish Councillors were in agreement.

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	
1 Allotment holders - rent and water	19.50	Defibstore – G5 defib pads	61.20
	19.50		61.20
Payments			
Community Hall	Half year grant		3,165.00
Grassroots	Lay new concrete ramp & paving slabs near tennis courts		3,551.52
Wages & Salaries	October salary + £11 mobile phone		1,365.63
Perfect Ground Solutions	Cricket square		1,260.00
Broxap	2 x replacement boot brushes		202.08
Frank Cooper & Son	Sportsfield grass cutting on 13th October 2021		74.40
Frank Cooper & Son	Football pitch line marking on 6th, 21st October		84.00
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – October 2021		48.00
Fred Burnell	Pest control		460.80
Community Hall	BHIB Trustees indemnity insurance		388.09
British Legion	Poppy donation		80.00
			10,679.52
Receipts			
Nationwide	Interest		17.37
Santander	Interest		0.22
17 Allotment holders	Allotment rent and water charges for 2021/2022		612.60
			630.19
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Tony Silverstri - Pavilion	84.00	Amazon – cord for toilet light pulls	4.59
Archery – Main Hall	120.00		4.59
Table Tennis -Main Hall	188.00		
Floodlighting donations 04.10.21-13.11.21	284.00		
Painting group – meet room – 4 weeks	40.00		
	716.00		
Payments			
Hertfordshire County	Cleaning materials		99.62
British Gas	Electricity		118.37
Wages	Cleaning		240.00
Enfield Electrical Supplies	Storm switch		26.79
HMRC	VAT return - September 2021		189.97
East Herts Council	Rates - 5 of 7		53.00
			727.75
Receipts			
Francesco La Cara	50% payment for hire on 28th Nov		54.00
Matt Stanbrook	Main Hall & Pavilion hire on		54.00
Watton-at-Stone Parish	Second half-year grant payment		3,165.00
Paula Sutton	Main Hall hire October - December		205.20
Peter Khera	Main Hall hire October - December		193.80
Elisher Maier	Second 50% payment for hire on 30th Oct		45.00
Julina Gittins	Second 50% payment for hire on 13th Nov		22.50
Santander	bank interest		0.09
Karen Richardson	Pavilion hire		21.00
Janine Gildersleve	Main Hall		560.50
Ildiko Imre-Kada	Meeting room		120.00
Emma Hanlon	Second 50% payment for hire on 13th Nov		26.25
Watton-at-Stone Parish	Trustees' indemnity insurance - reimbursement		388.09
			4,855.43

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Request for Budget items for 2022/2023**

Cllr. Block reminded Parish Councillors to give the Clerk their budget items for 2022/23 as soon as possible.

Action: Parish Councillors

He said that he and the Clerk will start to put the draft budget together this week

- **Date for Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting**

Cllr. Block to arrange a Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting.

Action: S. Block

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Report on Trustees meeting held on 10th November 2021**

Cllr. Meischke said that the Trustees minutes would be sent out in the next week. He then highlighted the main items and sort Parish Council approval where required.

- **Carpark**

Hertfordshire Planning submitted an e-mail quotation to Cllr. Smith for the following work.

1. £500 to carry out the measured survey of the site including levels/produced the existing survey drawings.
2. £750 to prepare the design scheme drawing for the proposed car park extension.
3. £750 to prepare a supporting planning statement/letter and submit a detailed planning application to the local authority.

The Parish Council agreed the Trustees recommendation to accept Hertfordshire Planning's quotation for items 1 and 2 as listed above.

- **Hirer's Deposits and agreements**

Cllr. Meischke said that he had investigated what other halls require for returnable deposits and most are asking for £100. This deposit is returnable, provided no damage is done to the hall or extra cleaning required.

Parish Council approved the Trustees recommendation that regular hirers should not be asked for a deposit. However, party only hirers should be asked to provide a one-off returnable deposit of £50.

The Trustees are looking into increasing the Community Hall hourly hiring charges, which have remained unchanged since the hall opened in 1996.

Cllr. Meischke to arrange for the proposed price increases to be e-mailed to all Parish Councillors when the Trustees minutes are sent out.

Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop

Cllrs. Meischke, Stock and Block to put together a draft booking form which incorporates the hire agreement and includes a cancellation policy.

Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock/S. Block

- **Sports Club charges/agreements**

The Trustees will meet with Cllr. Knight to discuss when he charges the different clubs.

Cllr. Meischke proposed that the Parish Council do not charge the Sports and Social Club for the first quarters of this year but charge them full price for the second and third quarters. This was agreed by Parish Councillors. The Clerk to invoice the Sports and Social Club accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Cleaners/Caretaker**

Cllr. Meischke said that he met with Hayley Daniels of H. D. Cleaning (the Monday cleaning company) because of reliability issues. H. D. Cleaning will no longer be doing this work, which will now be covered by Rosemary Brown and her associate, Maureen Monk. Hayley Daniels has said that if the Community Hall Trustees need an emergency cleaner, that she is happy to do the work.

The Trustees to draw up a job description for a caretaker and assess if the appointment should be on a casual or fixed hour basis.

Action: Trustees

- **Sportsfield maintenance work**

Cllr. Meischke said that Frank Cooper & Son Ltd have not done a full season of ground's maintenance jobs on the sportsfield and surrounding areas as they took over from David Payne part way through the year. He said that after some initial teething problems most of the work is being done well, although items such as weedkilling are being missed. If a caretaker is appointed, they could be responsible for items such as week killing. Parish Councillors agreed that Frank Cooper and Son Ltd should continue to do the maintenance work in the year 2022/2023.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight did not have anything to report.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

All allotment holders have now paid their rent for 2021-2022 and returned their signed Tenancy Agreements. Three plots have been relet and two remain empty with one person on the waiting list.

Cllr. Dinnin said that while she was inspecting the allotments on the 12th November, she saw that Mr. Bellamy, plot 37b, was starting to put up another six-foot polytunnel without the required permission from the Parish Council, as per the new Tenancy Agreement. As he had to build a wooden platform to make the structure level, this construction is now over six feet. She spoke to him about this and said she would

refer this to the Parish Council for discussion. He e-mailed to say that he would stop work until he heard from the Parish Council and attached pictures and drawings of the proposed polytunnel.

After discussion, the Parish Council agreed that Mr. Bellamy could erect the 2nd polytunnel, on receipt of a £50 deposit as outlined in clause 14 of the new Allotment tenancy agreement.

Mr. Bellamy to be informed accordingly.

Action: C. Dinnin/J. Allsop

Jim Knight, plot 16 near the waste ground, has had green rubbish dumped on his plot and apples picked from his trees. Cllr. Dinnin suggested a boundary rope could be erected along the side of this plot. Parish Councillors agreed that if Jim Knight wishes, he can put up a boundary fence to protect his plot.

Cllr. Dinnin to inform him accordingly.

Action: C. Dinnin

Adam Welch has quoted £90 to side up the allotment entrance hedge and two of the High Street properties bordering the allotment. Parish Councillors agreed to accept this quotation, and on this occasion, will pay for all the work to be done. Cllr. Dinnin to notify Adam Welch accordingly

Action: C. Dinnin

Clarion still have not cut their side of the allotment entrance. Refer to item 5 d, Review of actions - Chase Clarion Housing re overgrown hedge at Glebe Court.

- **Repair to steps & replacing wooden board on the Lammas**

Cllr. Dinnin said that she would speak to Tony Bradford about the Lammas steps, as she understood that CMS volunteers would be carrying out the repair works.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Grass cutting required on the Lammas, Watton Green and allotments-**

Cllr. Smith said that Jeff Skidmore Agricultural Ltd were cutting the Lammas grass today and would be doing the Watton Green grass cutting later in the week. He agreed to inspect both sites in the next week to see that everything has been done correctly.

Action: M. Smith

- **Hazeldell trees**

A resident contacted Cllr. Stock about the apparent poor condition and health of a road-side tree in Hazeldell. He met the resident on-site, took pictures and prepared a report accordingly, which the Clerk then sent to HCC.

County Cllr. Crofton has been made aware of this issue and has asked to be informed if we have not received a response from HCC within a period of three weeks.

Action: D. Stock/J. Allsop

- **Cottage site**

Cllr. Dinnin received the following e-mail on 6th November, which she forwarded to all Parish Councillors

‘Whilst processing the wood from last year's work I reviewed the condition of the woodland more generally.

During the walkover I noted that the neighbouring land adjoining the woodland's western boundary was accommodating a large patch of Japanese Knotweed (JK); picture attached. You will be aware that JK is a highly invasive non-native plant that causes significant problems when introduced into wildlife habitats like the cottage woodland and nearby green.

On closer examination I observed that there was plastic sheeting under the JK suggesting that attempts have been made in the past to suppress the infestation but that this is proving ineffective.

The JK is growing directly adjacent to the woodland boundary. It is highly likely that its rhizomes will spread into the woodland, and this must be prevented by your neighbour. There is some useful guidance here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-japanese-knotweed-from-spreading> The Parish Council may wish to write to the owner to bring this situation to their attention and share with them information on their responsibilities in this regard.’

It was agreed to write to the owners of the Crowbury, who own the land the Japanese knotweed is on, stating that whilst legislation confirms that they are not obliged to control it on their own land, the Parish Council would be obliged if they could take action to stop it spreading onto the Cottage site, which is publicly owned land. Japanese Knotweed would be almost impossible to control on this woodland area. **Action: M. Smith**

b) Routine Reports

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

Cllr. Meischke has carried out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests.

Cllr. Meischke continues to inspect the hall regularly including running the water every 2-3 weeks 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. Stock completed the report on 12th November 2021. A copy of the report has been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors. Only the adverse items highlighted in the monthly village-report are minuted here.

- **Play area** – surface issues already known. No action required as this item.
- **Community Hall** – RVTV sign vandalised, so phone number removed
A replacement sign to be ordered. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Allotment Access** – overgrown – this item is being addressed, refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.
- **Dog waste bins** – as previously reported.

vi) Weekly sportsfield-report

Nothing to report.

vii) Weekly defibrillator inspection

Cllr. Meischke fitted the new defibrillator pads on his return from holiday. However, within days of fitting them the defibrillator was used to try and save someone's life and another set of pads had to be purchased and fitted.

The Clerk has updated the expiry date of the defibrillator pads (28/01/2024) on The Circuit website, which is run by the British Heart Foundation.

Cllr. Stock confirmed that the defibrillator was in working order (light showing green) when he inspected it on 12th November.

Cllr. Hammon continues to do weekly regular checks.

Parish Councillors agreed that more visible signage is needed in the BT phone box where the defibrillator is housed, to make people aware of its existence. Cllrs. Smith, Meischke and Stock to arrange to have signs made. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke/D. Stock**

viii) Website/Facebook

None.

ix) Highway issues

None.

x) Dog fouling reports

None.

• Litter collection

Cllr. Bell said that the current problem of litterpicking and bin emptying is being discussed by a EHDC committee who will try and get the system working again. The problem started during the first Covid lockdown in 2020 and has got progressively worse.

Parish Councillors agreed that personal rubbish should not be deposited in Parish Council bins as this exacerbates the problem.

xi) Police reports

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of PCSO Sally Brook's police report dated 15th November.

9. Correspondence received**a) Middlesex County Automobile Club - Hertfordshire Stages Rally 2022**

Peter Walters, liaison for the Hertfordshire Stages Rally 2022, would like to attend a Parish Council meeting to discuss their plans for this Rally. He last attended a Parish Council meeting in February 2020 for their Rally planned for July that year. This got cancelled due to Covid-19.

Cllr. Knight said that the residents of High Elms Lane are not happy about the event being held.

Parish Councillors agreed that they were not in support of the Rally and do not want to be involved.

Mr. Walters to be notified accordingly.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

10. Village organisations

Cllr. Stock attended today's AGM and committee meeting. Things remain in good shape overall although a major booking has been lost and a replacement is being sort.

The following were re-elected.

- Chairman: Helen McCash
- Secretary: Peter Doolan
- Treasurer: Pam Filer
- Bookings Secretary: Christine Grant.

11. Items for Parish News

Cllr. Waltham to place an entry in the February issue of the Parish News regarding the Neighbourhood Plan's Regulation 14 consultation. **Action: E. Waltham**

The meeting closed at 2128.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 14th December 2021.