

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 14th December 2021

Present:	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Christine Dinnin	Cllr. Catherine Hammon
	Cllr. Ian Knight	Cllr. David Stock
	Clerk: Jane Allsop	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs. Steve Block, Kay Jancey, Helen, McCash, Emma Waltham and District Cllr. Sophie Bell.

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 16th November 2021**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1. **Chase Clarion Housing re overgrown hedge at Glebe Court**
This hedge has now been cut back. Refer to Cllr. Dinnin's report under 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee.
2. **Arrange for the purchase and fitting of two handrails for the new entrance onto the sportsfield**
Outstanding. **Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke**
3. **Replace the wooden steps on the rainbow multi-play and slide play equipment**
Cllr. Smith has replaced the most damaged log steps and will arrange to replace the remaining steps in the next month or two. **Action: M. Smith**
4. **Speak to Tony Bradford about repair work to the Lammas steps**
Cllr. Dinnin spoke to Tony Bradford after the November Parish Council meeting, and he is trying to get a team of workers together to have the repair work done. This item to remain on the agenda until resolved. **Agenda: 01/2022**

c) Action points resolved

1. Give Cllr. Block items to be included in 2022/23 budget
2. **Monitor trip hazard on old footpath to tennis courts**
Cllr. Meischke said that Wicksteed will be levelling and turfing this area once they have completed work to the play area site. This work should be completed before Christmas. Cllr. Meischke to monitor. **Action: J. Meischke**
3. Write to planning department re application for 20 High Street
4. Write to planning department re application for Blue Hill Villa, Walkern Road
5. Give Cllr. Bell wording for drink spiking article
6. Arrange date for Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting
7. E-mail proposed Community Hall price increases to all Parish Councillors with Trustees minutes
8. Invoice the Sports and Social Club for period 1st April to 31st December 2021
9. **Draw up job description for a caretaker:** outstanding **Action: Trustees**
10. Inform allotment holder of deposit charge for erecting a polytunnel
11. **Speak to allotment holder re fencing to protect plot:** outstanding. **Action: C. Dinnin**
12. Accept Adam Welch's quotation to cut back allotment entrance
13. Inspect Watton Green and the Lammas re grass cutting work
14. Contact County Cllr. Crofton about Hazeldell tree if no response received within three weeks
15. Write to the owners of the Crowbury re Japanese Knotweed
16. **Order replacement RVTV sign**
Cllr. Meischke believes there may be a RVTV spare sign in the Community Hall and he agreed to look for it. **Action: J. Meischke**
17. **Arrange for more visible defibrillator signage for the BT phone box**
Cllr. Smith said the signage is on order and he would chase 1st Call Signs. **Action: M. Smith**
18. E-mail response to Mr. Walters re Middlesex County Hertfordshire Rally 2022
19. Write Parish News insert re Neighbourhood Plan's Regulation 14 for February 2022 issue

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) **Watton Mill, Mill Lane (3/21/2834/FUL)**

Refurbish and reinstatement of building for office B1 use, reinstating window openings, amendment to window openings, infill window openings with brickwork and removal of external steps. Erection of an additional storey roof addition to create second floor level. Reinstatement of car parking spaces, introduce new car parking bays and cycle parking bays. Retaining the existing fabric and landscape.

The Parish Council agreed, via e-mail, a no comment response.

ii) **Land at St Andrews and St Marys Church, Church Lane (3/21/2921/FUL)**

Change of use of 7 metres of grazing land to burial land

Cllr. Knight explained that the Diocesan board have agreed to transfer the 7 metres of grazing land over to the Parish Church to extend the burial area, which should be sufficient for another 10 years of burials. He said it was unlikely that any further land would be granted and that once the graveyard is full, it is the responsibility of the Parish Council to provide land for a graveyard.

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

iii) **Heath Mount School, Woodhall park (3/21/2680/FUL)**

Proposed cabin to be used as classroom

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

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

• **48 Great Innings North (3/21/3069/HH)**

Conversion of garage to habitable space

The Parish Council agreed a no comment response.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

i) **Gregorys Farm, Dane End, Hertfordshire SG12 0PH (3/21/0750/FUL)**

Timber framed garden office outbuilding and proposed landscape works for recessed swimming pool, recessed plant room, outdoor kitchen and dining area, seating areas, low level garden walls, terraced planting beds, fencing, amendments to garden wall, oil storage area and bins store area

- EHDC permission granted

7. Reports

a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

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

b) Neighbourhood plan and benefits

The Neighbourhood Plan website has gone down because its hosting, Moonfruit, closed its platform on 7th December and it was then migrated to Wix by Yell, who own Moonfruit, but they have made a hash of the migration and the only content that made it across is an old news item from 2016. All the other content has been lost.

Parish Councillors agreed that all relevant content from the former Neighbourhood Plan website can be integrated into the watton-pc.org.uk site under the heading WAS Neighbourhood Plan.

It was agreed to ask Beanebytes to add extra drop-down menus under the WAS Neighbourhood Plan heading. Cllr. Waltham to give the Clerk all relevant material required for uploading to the website. This work will need to be completed before the start of regulation 14 which begins on 10th January 2022.

Action: E. Waltham/J. Allsop

c) Sports Club

The meeting arranged to discuss Sports Clubs was cancelled last week. This will be rescheduled for early in 2022.

Action: S. Block

Agenda: 01/2022

d) A602 improvement scheme

Cllr. Meischke said he had no good news to report. EHDC have told Highways they will not provide a dog bin as there is already one in place within two hundred yards of the proposed site. However, they agreed to monitor dog fouling in this area.

After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed that if Highways are willing to pay for a dog bin, the Parish Council will pay for it to be emptied. Cllr. Meischke to speak to the A602 team.

Action: J. Meischke

Parish Councillors were disappointed to learn that the village gateway sign will not be in the wood style requested but fixed to metal poles.

Cllr. Meischke said that he had not had any feedback about the SID (Speed Indicator Devices) signs but would raise this issue again when he replies to the last e-mail from Linzy Outtrim (A602 team). Cllr. Smith to see if there are any funding available for a SID sign.

Action: M. Smith

- e) **Trimming back of trees and hedging along Hockerill footpath that runs parallel with Station Road**
Cllr. Dinnin said that the Hockerill slope and surrounding footpaths have been resurfaced and the trees and bushes all cut back, but the height of the trees and bushes has not been reduced.
However, the stretch of footpath from the top of Hockerill slope towards the George and Dragon now needs doing. It was agreed to send an e-mail to Ken Crofton asking him if this footpath work could be resurfaced and thanking him for the work already done. **Action: M. Smith**
- f) **Memorial seats**
Two memorial benches have been ordered from Glasdon UK in memory of John Waring and Andrew Dalrymple. the estimated delivery time of these recycled plastic benches is 8-10 weeks.
Cllr. Smith said that he will arrange for two concrete pads to be installed for the new seats to sit on. **Action: M. Smith**
Agenda: 01/2022
This item to remain on the agenda.
- g) **Speed signs**
As reported on under item 7 d, Specific items - A602 improvement scheme, Cllr. Smith to see if there is any funding available from the police funds for a SID (Speed Indicator Devices) sign. **Action: M. Smith**

8. Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block, who was not present at the meeting, but provided a report for this meeting.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments	
None		BT phone calls – two months 8/10/21	46.26
			46.26
Payments			
Jeff Skidmore	Grass cutting work on Lammas and Watton Green		3,090.00
Wages & Salaries	November 2021		1,365.83
Adam Welch	Half-season strim/mow maintenance work, £20 weed, £90 allot entrance		1,710.00
Grassroots	War Memorial maintenance – November 2021		48.00
SLCC	Annual subscription		171.00
Govresources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan		3,600.00
			9,984.83
Receipts			
Nationwide	Interest		16.82
Santander	Interest		0.22
Rotary Fireworks	Donation for use of mobile floodlights		50.00
Sports & Social Club	qtr1 - £0, qtr2 - £397.50, qtr3 - £397.50		795.00
2 Allotment holders	Allotment rent and water charges and two deposits		119.40
			981.44
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall			
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Tony Silverstri - Pavilion	48.00	None	
Archery – Main Hall	60.00		
Painting group – meet room – 4 weeks	40.00		
Bowls	135.00		
Table Tennis -Main Hall	168.00		
Floodlighting donations from 13.11.21 –	147.00		
Luke Cross – Main Hall – 2 weeks	30.00		
	628.00		
Payments			
British Gas	Gas		50.67
HMRC	VAT return - September 2021		250.78
British Gas	Electricity		186.55
			488.00
Receipts			
Caroline Paton	Second payment on hirings on 20th Nov & 4th Dec		85.00
Caroline Paton	Extra ½ hour for 20th November		9.00
Talbott Fitness	Use of toilet and changing room facilities		90.00
Francesco La Cara	Second payment for hire on 28th Nov		54.00
Kelly Rothberg	Second payment for hire on 4th Dec		33.75
Lyn Oakman	Pavilion hire Jan 2022		35.00
Dawes-Martin	First 50% deposit for hire on 30th Dec		27.00
Holly Wiles	Second payment for hire on 11th Dec		31.50
Santander	Bank interest		0.08
Codie Page	Second payment for hire on 5th Dec		37.50
Sports & Social Club	Otr. 1 = £0, Otr. 2 = £397.50, qtr3 = £397.50		795.00
S. Block (Table	Main hall		40.00
			1,237.83

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Report and Approval of minutes of Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 24/11/2021**
All Parish Councillors were e-mailed copies of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee minutes together with associated paperwork relating to the budgets for 2022/23 prior to this meeting.
Parish Councillors approved the minutes and recommendations contained in the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee minutes dated 24th November 2021. Cllr. Block to sign the minutes. **Action: S. Block**
- **Quotations received from contractors**
Parish Councillors agreed to accept the following quotations, which are detailed in the minutes of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting dated 24th November.
 - Frank Cooper and Son Limited quotation (dated 3rd November 2021) for Sportsfield grass cutting.
 - Frank Cooper and Son Limited Sportsfield quotation (dated 3rd November 2021) flower bed and grass cutting work around the perimeter of sportsfield, Community Hall, tennis courts, bike ramps and seating areas etc.
 - Grassroots quotation for War Memorial Garden maintenance.
 The contractors to be notified accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**
Parish Councillors approved the following.
- **Community Hall hire charges**
The Main Hall and Pavilion hire charges to be increased by £2 per hour and the Meeting room by £1 per hour. The price increases will come into effect on 1st April 2022.
- **Sports Clubs hire charges**
The annual hire charge to the Sports Clubs be increased from £3,180 to £3,350. The price increases will come into effect on 1st April 2022.
- **Allotment rental charges**
The allotment rent to be increased from £30 to £32 per full allotment and £15 to £16 for one half of an allotment.
The price increases will come into effect on 1st October 2022 (the annual allotment rent renewal date).
Water charges will be agreed at the September Parish Council meeting. **Agenda: 09/2022**
- **Employees and self-employed remuneration**
The Parish Council agreed the recommendations of the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee for Rosemary Brown's litterpicking and cleaning hourly rates.
- **Budget 2022/23**
Parish Councillors approved the budget figures for 2022/2023.
- **Precept 2022/23**
Parish Councillors provisionally approved the annual precept requirements for 2022/23 of £38,490, which is an increase of just over 3.5%.
- **Approval and signing of Precept forms for 2022/23**
The Parish Council will formally agree the precept figure at their meeting in January 2022 and sign the precept form. This item to be placed on the January 2022 agenda. **Agenda: 01/2022**

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Minutes of Trustees meeting held on 10th November 2021**
All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of the Trustee minutes.
Cllrs. Meischke and Stock approved the minutes, which were then signed by Cllr. Meischke.
- **Update on play area work.**
Cllr. Meischke said that Wicksteed Leisure are currently on site working on the upgrades for the play area. They have removed the large swings, which they were not expected to do, and will arrange for their disposal. This job had formed part of Grassroots quotation for the car park extension work.
Some of the pieces of play equipment did not fit in the allocated spaces and the swings were bigger than they expected, requiring a larger safety surface area under them. Wicksteed Leisure have agreed not to charge for the extra safety surface. One of the benches is being removed so two long benches are together. Where the bench was removed, a new picnic table will be installed, and a cheaper safety surface put under it, as this is currently a grassed area.
Wicksteed Leisure have quoted for the extra work as follows:
 1. Dig out and relocate bench £374.00 (partly complete)
 2. Install base beneath relocated picnic table £350.00
 3. Install 40mm thick wet pour surface onto base under relocated picnic table £500.00
 4. To install two concrete pads for benches to be fitted by yourselves at a later date £674.00
 5. To cut off swing and see saw at ground level £374.00 (completed)
 Total for above work £2272.00 – discount as per original order = £1953.00 excluding VAT
Parish Councillors agreed to accept the above quotation, except for item 4, which they will ask Mark Blacktin to quote for. **Action: J. Meischke**

Cllr. Meischke reminded Parish Councillors that Cllr. Block was successful in obtaining a £2,000 grant from Stevenage Community Trust. This grant more than cover the additional costs incurred.

Cllr. Meischke said that all newly installed safety surface will have rounded edging and no concrete edging will be installed. There will be some existing concrete edging remaining on the areas that Wicksteed Leisure have not been working on.

Cllr. Meischke said that Wicksteed Leisure have been exceptionally good with what they are doing. They had asked to go onto the sportsfield with their equipment but were told they could not because the football pitch needs to remain in use. They have therefore had to do hand digging and have kept the area clean and tidy.

- **First Aid Kit**

A medium sized first aid kit refill is on order. When this has been received, Cllr. Meischke will check to see what additional items need to be ordered.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Cleaners**

Rosemary Brown and Maureen Monk are working well keeping the hall clean. However, it was agreed that the Trustees need to look at a cleaning strategy for the future. It could be that part of a new caretaker's job includes cleaning duties.

- **Hirer's**

Cllr. Meischke said that the increase in hirings for children's parties over the last 3 months was encouraging.

- **Youth Club Equipment & keys return**

Cllr. Meischke said that he had put most of the Youth Club equipment in the loft.

The Clerk to ask Lyn Oakman the whereabouts of the Youth Club set of Community Hall keys.

Action: J. Allsop

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **Tennis courts**

Cllr. Knight said that two people fell over in the double tennis courts because the surface was slippery with moss. He obtained a quotation (dated 10th December) for £995 plus VAT from Sports Courts to have all three courts moss killed and pressure washed. This amount is within the budget figure for 2021/22.

Parish Councillors agreed to accept the quotation and ask Sports Courts to proceed with the work.

Action: I. Knight

- **Lighting**

Cllr. Knight said that the present court light is in wrong place as is the streetlamp now that the entrance onto Church Walk has been moved. Cllr. Meischke said that it would not be possible to move the streetlight, which is County Council owned. However, he could look at installing a brighter egress light and extend the time the light stays on. This would resolve the problem of leaving the courts but not those exiting Church Walk to get to the tennis courts in the dark.

Cllrs. Meischke and Knight to discuss the options.

Action: J. Meischke/I. Knight

- **Litter**

Cllr. Knight said that there is an ongoing problem of litter around the tennis courts and another rubbish bin is needed.

Cllr. Meischke said that EHDC are supposed to empty the litterbins on the sportsfield, but rarely do so and Rosemary Brown usually empties them. Cllrs. Meischke and Block to look at the option of installing another litterbin near the Tennis Courts.

Action: J. Meischke/S. Block

- **Drainage channel around tennis courts**

Cllr. Knight said that the aggregate around court is looking bad. When the double courts are resurfaced this problem will also be resolved.

Cllr. Meischke suggested that the Tennis Club could help with the maintenance of the gravel around the tennis courts and pointed out that the Cricket and Football Clubs help with the areas of the sportsfield they use and we should ask the Tennis Club to do the same.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Allotments**

Cllr. Dinnin said that both sides of the allotment hedges have now been cut back. Clarion Housing cut back the Glebe Court side and Adam Welch cut back the other side (refer to the November 2021 Parish Council minutes).

Most plots are particularly good for the time of the year, but four need watching and two are still vacant.

There are two people currently on the waiting list, and Cllr. Dinnin will be contacting them soon.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Cottage Site**

The Clerk said that the letter to the Crowbury re Japanese Knotweed was posted approximately 10 days ago, and no response has been received so far.

- **Hazeldell Tree**

Cllr. Stock was happy to report that the tree-problem reported to him by a resident is now resolved. The tree was subsequently inspected by HCC and found to be in good health but in need of some work. The resultant pruning/tidy-up work has now been completed and the tree looks much improved. He spoke with the people doing the work and they confirmed that the tree was typical of its type and were content that it was in OK in all respects. All parties involved are happy with this outcome.

- **Beane cottage**

Mr. Victor Sell of Beane Cottage contacted the Clerk re the Parish Council's Laurel hedge that it adjacent to his boundary. He said that Adam Welch usually cuts this hedge back for him and it is currently blocking light to his kitchen window.

Cllrs. Smith and Dinnin to meet with Mr. Sell to discuss this and the Parish Council land he has an agreement to use as part of his garden.

Action: C. Dinnin/M. Smith

b) **Routine Reports**

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

Cllr. Meischke to carry-out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests in the next week.

Action: J. Meischke

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. Hammon completed the report on 13th December 2021. A copy of the report was e-mailed to all Parish Councillors prior to this meeting.

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

- **Play area/ sportsfield:** Wicksteed Leisure have begun work on the play area, so this area has not been checked
- **Mill Lane:** there are a lot of bits of dropped rubbish (non-fly-tipping items) at the entrance to the field on the right of Mill Lane, this is Woodhall Estate land, so not Parish Council's responsibility.
- **Salt bins:** High Elms Lane - half full and water-logged with a lot of dead snails in it.
As agreed at the October 2021 Parish Council meeting, after the salt bins get filled by Hertfordshire Highways, Cllr. Smith will inspect the bin up at High Elms Lane to see if Highways have cut back the nettles and filled the bin with salt.

Action: M. Smith

- **Ornate village sign:** lead flashing nails coming out.

Cllrs. Smith and Meischke to inspect and take action as required.

Action: M. Smith/J. Meischke

vi) **Weekly sportsfield-report**

Nothing to report.

vii) **Weekly defibrillator inspection**

None.

viii) **Website/Facebook**

As agreed under item 7 b, Specific items - Neighbourhood plan and benefits, the content of the former Neighbourhood Plan site is being integrated into the watton-pc.org.uk site.

ix) **Highway issues**

None.

x) **Dog fouling reports**

None.

xi) **Police reports**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed a copy of PCSO Sally Brook's police report dated 14th December.

9. **Correspondence received**

None.

10. **Village organisations**

None.

11. **Items for Parish News**

None.

The meeting closed at 2057.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 18th January 2022.