

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 15th March 2022

Present:	Cllr. Michael Smith (Chairman)	Cllr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr. Steve Block	Cllr. Catherine Hammon after 2035
	Cllr. Kay Jancey	Cllr. Ian Knight
	Cllr. David Stock	Clerk: Jane Allsop

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies: Cllrs. Christine Dinnin, Helen McCash and 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 15th February 2022**
Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

b) Review of actions

1. **Arrange for the purchase and fitting of two handrails for the new entrance onto the sportsfield**
Cllr. Meischke reported that Ben Storey (Grassroots) has been instructed to order the handrails and he expects to fit them sometime next week.
This item to remain on the agenda under Community Hall Trustees **Agenda: Trustees 04/2022**
2. **Contact Mr. Sell re Parish Council land adjacent to his property**
Refer to item 7 g, Specific items – Parish Council land adjacent to Beane Cottage.
3. **Contact Bob Adams re ferreting licenses**
Bob Adams has signed and returned the ferreting licenses (refer to February 2022 minutes).
4. **E-mail Trustees draft Caretaker job description**
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – Caretaker.
5. **Contact Crowbury owners re Japanese knotweed on their land**
Refer to item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee – Cottage site.

c) Action points resolved

1. Write to planning department re application for 20 High Street
2. Write to planning department re application for Gregorys Farm
3. Write to planning department re application for Heath Mount School
4. Write to planning department re application for Community Sports Hall
5. E-mail Cllr. McCash a copy of the memorandum of understanding letter
6. Contact solicitor who specialises in options
7. Renew license across cottage site
8. Investigate First Aid courses for April or May
9. Update Financial regulations document and upload to website
10. Update Risk Assessment & Financial management document and upload to website
11. Accept Gas & Electricity contract prices from Business Utility Renewals Limited
12. Look for new water contracts for both the Parish Council and Community Hall
13. Speak to Eliot Manarin re band for Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations
14. E-mail all allotments holders re one-meter gap between plot and the Church Walk hedge
15. Contact contractors who quoted for grass and hedge cutting work
16. Contact Tony Bradford re Lammas steps
17. Inspect footpath along millennium walk re safety of some steps and railings
18. Obtain prices for 10 litter pickers to replace those that have broken
19. Write article for Parish News re Queen's platinum jubilee celebrations

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 and a no comment response was agreed.

i) **Heath Mount School, Woodhall Park (3/21/3182/FUL)**

Retention of 1 single storey portacabin building to be used as an additional classroom for a period of 26 weeks

b) Decisions**i) 4 Newmans Court (3/21/0934/LBC)**

Replacement of windows and external doors. Installation of new roof lights to rear
- EHDC permission granted

ii) 1 Watton House (3/21/1517/HH)

Demolition of detached garage and side entrance way; Construction of single storey and two storey side extension; loft conversion with roof lights new front porch
- EHDC permission granted

7. Specific items**a) Neighbourhood plan and benefits**

Cllr. Waltham provided the following report.

The consultation finished on 6th March and the NP steering group is now adding the statutory and resident comments received to spreadsheets. We will then review them to assess if any amendments to the plan will be necessary. This process will take several more weeks as we received more than 100 resident comments, as well as the statutory responses.

b) A602 improvement scheme

Cllr. Meischke said he had still heard nothing about the promised dog waste bin.

The A602 road diversions have been a problem over the past months. A recently completed section of the road, which could have been reopened, was kept closed because the people who had been working on the road are not allowed to remove barriers as they are the responsibility of Highways.

c) Hockerill footpath behind the George and Dragon public house

Cllr. Smith said there was no progress to report on this item.

This item to remain on the agenda until resolved.

Agenda: 04/2022

d) Work required to HCC owned hedge that runs along the Grey House boundary

Cllr. Smith said that he e-mailed County Councillor (CC) Ken Crofton re the state of this hedge, who had mistakenly thought the hedge referred to was from Great Innings into Hazeldell.

Since this communication, a member of public has cut back the shrubbery and dumped the cuttings on the grass area near the Great Innings flats. He said this was a shame because HCC can no longer see the extent of the problem, which required the complete removal of some of the planting.

CC Crofton is arranging for EHDC to remove the cuttings.

e) Memorial seats

Cllr. Smith said that a complaint has been received from Alan Headland about the location of the John Waring memorial seat, as it was not installed in the agreed position. He states that in its current location it gets covered in bird excrement and the cricket square will not be visible during play as the sightscreens will hide the pitch.

Cllr. Smith said that the seat was supposed to be installed in place of the old concrete seat at the top of the field. However, as the new memorial seats were delivered a month sooner than expected and needed to be installed in some haste to prevent them from being stolen, there was insufficient time to remove the old concrete seat. He and Cllr. Meischke therefore chose an alternative location for the seat.

f) Speed signs

Cllr. Smith said that we are waiting to hear the result of our application for funding towards speed signs for the village.

g) Parish Council land adjacent to Beane Cottage

Cllr. Smith said that Mr. Sell did not agree to increase his offer of £2,500. It was agreed to inform Mr. Sell that the Parish Council would not accept such a low offer and give him the option of either increasing his offer or paying an annual rent.

Action: M. Smith

h) First aid course

Cllr. Jancey reported that she had obtained a quote for an identical first aid course from the company we used in October 2019.

In 2019 the Parish Council paid £389 + VAT for 12 people, they have now quoted us £529 + VAT for 12 people, a 36% increase.

Assuming we can claim the VAT back and we charge £20 per person the Parish council would still need to contribute £578 (2 sessions up to 24 people)

Cllr. Jancey has emailed the company to express her disappointment at such a large price increase and awaits their response.

It was agreed to obtain alternative quotations, possibly via HCC (CC Ken Crofton) or EHDC (Claire Pullen), and advertise the current situation on Facebook, our website and to those who expressed an interest.

Action: K. Jancey/J. Allsop

i) Litter pickers update

Cllr. Meischke said that the group of young people, accompanied by adults, are collecting between 3-6 bags of rubbish a week as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Cllr. Meischke said that the 8 new litter pickers were less than £3 each, a small price to pay for keeping our village tidy.

8. Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Cllr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council		
Petty Cash Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
None		None
Payments		
Grassroots	Install 2 benches under oak tree on the sportsfield	388.90
Wages & salaries	March 2022	1,365.43
Emma Waltham	Domain name - was-np.org	21.59
Fasthost	Domain name: watton-pc.org.uk	12.59
Amazon	8 Litter picker	29.95
		1,818.46
Receipts		
SSC	Line marking	175.00
Sports & Social Club	Qtr. 4 - 1st January to 31st March 2022	397.50
Watton at Stone	Cricket donation paid into wrong a/c	1,050.00
May Davis	Allotment rent and deposit	69.40
Watton at Stone	return of overpay of NHB grant	2,000.00
Nationwide	Interest	25.13
HMRC	Vat rebate	4,804.62
Santander	Interest	0.04
		8,521.69
Watton-at-Stone Community Hall		
Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Archery – Main Hall	70.00	
Bowls – Main Hall	131.00	
Table Tennis – Main Hall	192.00	
Tony Silverstri – Pavilion	84.00	
Youth Football – Main Hall	30.00	
	507.00	
Payments		
British Gas	Gas	190.68
James Turner	Service of 2 boilers on 16th December	196.80
Watton- at-Stone	cricket donation paid to wrong account	1,050.00
Kompan	4 x plastic plus for end of tubes on toddler swings	14.40
Hertford Planning	Work required to draw up plans for car park extension	2,534.00
Watton- at-Stone	overpaid from NHB did not take into account £2000 grant	2,000.00
Wages	Cleaning	290.00
British Gas	Electricity	115.23
HCC	Cleaning materials	34.18
Floodlighting Ltd	Re-alignment of floodlights following storm	216.00
		6,641.29
Receipts		
Lisa Purdy	1st 50% deposit for hire - 9th July	28.50
Laura Thurgood	1st 50% deposit for hire - 26th March	45.00
Prasheela Vara	1st 50% deposit for hire - 9th April	38.00
Santander	bank interest	0.08
Vicki Stanley	2nd payment for hire on 5th March + 1 hour	37.50
Natalie McPherson	Full payment for July 2022	75.00
Louise Davis	Main Hall - 1 hr on 11th March	10.00
Claire Lale	2nd payment for hire on 12th March	36.00
Michelle Stenson	2nd payment for hire - 13th March	22.50
Rebecca Yule	Pavilion hire 14th April	27.00
Rebecca Yule	Pavilion hire 14th April	9.00
Claire Messina	1st 50% deposit for hire - 23rd July	38.00
Ben Talbott	Use of toilet and changing room facilities	100.00
		466.58

Parish Councillors approved the payments.

- **Annual review of documents**

- **Review Asset registers**

This is still in the process of being updated.

- **Long term capital expenditures**

This is still in the process of being updated.

Asset registers and long-term capital expenditures to be placed on the April agenda.

Agenda: 04/2022

- **Appoint auditor for the Internal audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022**
Parish Councillors agreed that Stuart McCash is appointed as the internal auditor of the Parish Council accounts.
The Clerk to arrange for the Parish Council accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2022, to be submitted to Stuart McCash for auditing. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Appoint auditor for the External audit of the Community Hall accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022**
Parish Councillors agreed that McCash and Hay are appointed as the external auditor of the Community Hall accounts.
The Clerk will arrange for the Community Hall accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2022, to be submitted to McCash and Hay for auditing. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **SLCC – 2021-2022 National salary award**
The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services has agreed the new rate of pay (an increase of 1.75%) applicable from 1st April 2021.
The Clerk left the room while this item was discussed.
Parish Councillors agreed it was appropriate to give the Clerk the backdated pay increase as she is paid in line with the NALC pay guidelines.
The Clerk returned to the meeting.

Community Hall Trustees

Cllr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Energy supplier**
The Clerk has signed a three-year contract, on behalf of the Community Hall Trustees, with British Gas Lite via broker John Molnar of Business Utility Renewals Ltd. These prices are lower than those originally quoted.
 - **Gas contract**
Three-year gas contract commences on 8th April 2022.
The standing charges are 45p, per day and the unit price 9.25p per kwh.
 - **Electricity contract**
Three-year contract commences on 26th April 2022.
The standing charges are 29.09p and the unit rate 28.75p per kwh.
 - **Water**
John Molnar (Business Utility Renewals Ltd) provided contract prices from 'everflow water' for both the Parish Council and Community Hall.
The price of wholesale services is the same as our current supplier, but the retail services are lower. The retail savings are approximately £15 for the Allotment water and £52 for the Community Hall. Cllr. Smith said that both the Parish Council and Community Hall had lots of billing problems transferring over from Affinity Water to Castle Water and these problems have only just been resolved. He suggested that we remain with our current provider. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.
The Clerk to notify John Molnar accordingly. **Action: M. Smith**
- **Bike ramps**
The bike ramps have been removed from site.
- **Caretaker**
Cllr. Meischke e-mailed all Parish Councillors the caretaker job specification and advert. He received responses from Cllrs. Jancey and McCash. Cllr. Jancey suggested that the probation period is increased from one to three months. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.
Cllr. McCash was concerned about risk assessment and insurance cover. Cllr. Meischke said that the Parish Council already has a risk assessment, which covers any worker plus anyone taken on would be required have their own risk assessment. Cllr. Meischke said that he had looked at our current insurance policy and we are well covered for all aspects relating to volunteers and self-employed people working for the Parish Council or Community Hall.
- Cllr. Hammon arrived at 20.35
It was agreed that the closing date for applications will be Sunday 15th May. The caretaker advert be amended to show the closing date and three-month probation period. Copies placed on Facebook, the Parish Council website and notice boards and the April edition of the Parish News.
Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop

- **Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

Cllr. Meischke set out the timetable for the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council jubilee celebrations as follows

The event will be preceded by the Village Fete on the Church field which will finish at about 16.30/17.00 once the field is clear it will become a Car park for the Event on the Sports field.

Both organisers can arrange to ensure both events are advertised in unison, can share the Bunting and flags cost and do everything to help it be seen as one Celebration.

Any local prize awards could be conducted in the evening.

The planned event will be free, bring your own Picnic to the field we will supply music and a live Band (Sofasonic) the Scouts will run a Barbeque and we will provide a 10-minute (max) Firework display.

The Planned Event timing will be:

- 19.00 Start, pre-recorded music starts
- 19.30 Barbeque starts
- 20.15 Presentation or/and other???
- 21.00 Sofasonic Live
- 10.00 Fireworks
- 10.15 Sofasonic Live
- 11.00 END

Cllr. Meischke asked Parish Councillors to e-mail him approval of the approximate costings listed below.

Action: Parish Councillors

Fireworks	£2500
Band and sound system	£350
Extras for band?	£200
Stage and cover	£390
Bunting flags etc.	£200
Advertising	£100

Other items for consideration are

1. Ask for first aiders to attend
2. Set up in the Morning.
3. Check electrics required - Elliot Manarin to do
4. Do HSE risk assessment - 2 people (Trustees)
5. Rope of complete Cricket pitch & safety area for Fireworks.
6. Only Band, Scouts, management and disabled vehicle's allowed access to hall car park.
7. Alcohol will not be available to purchase on the field or within the Hall.

Various volunteers from the village have come forward to help with the event.

Cllr Smith said he would talk to his daughter about the school input.

Action: M. Smith

- **Area and Tennis court end ramp**

Refer to item 5 b, Review of actions – Arrange for the purchase and fitting of two handrails for the new entrance onto the sportsfield.

- **Complaint about Mud between swings**

Cllr. Meischke said he had received complaints from two mothers about mud from between the swing areas going onto the safety surface. A possible solution might be to put paving slabs down on the non-safety surface area, but it would be better to wait for the ground to dry out further before agreeing a solution.

This item to be put on the May 2022 agenda.

Agenda: 05/2022

- **ECCP - EHDC update**

Cllr. Meischke said that EHDC have conducted a survey re the ECCP (Electrical Car charging point).

He said he spoke to the surveyor about various aspects of a grant being awarded. Grants would only be awarded to dual charging points, and it is unlikely that the charging point could be located near the boiler room cupboard and would need to be where the current disabled car parking space is located. This would mean the loss of two parking spaces, in what is already a very congested parking area.

Parish Councillors and the Trustees will need to consider if a ECCP installation would be cost effective.

This item to be put on the May 2022 agenda.

Agenda: 05/2022

- **Sports clubs**

Parish Councillors agreed that all sporting and hobby clubs in the village will be able to hold their AGMs free of charge in the Community Hall's Pavilion or meeting room.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

Cllr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **Storm damage to floodlighting units**
The floodlights were knocked out of alignment during the recent storms. Floodlighting Limited Services Limited have realigned them at a cost of £180 plus VAT.

Environment Sub-Committee

Cllr. Dinnin provided the following report for this meeting.

- **Allotments**
E-mail sent to allotment holders about the hedge along Church Walk and keeping a one metre gap between their plot and the hedge.
- **Cottage site**
Tony Bradford reported to Cllr. Dinnin that Japanese Knotweed needs to be kept an eye on. It is not illegal to have it on your land, but it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to let it spread onto another's land particularly causing it to grow in the wild. Under Schedule 9, penalties are £5000 or 6 months in prison.
He will go and check in a few weeks' time. This item to remain on the agenda under Environment Sub-Committee until resolved. **Agenda: Env 04/2022**
- **The Lammas steps**
Cllrs. Jancey and Block very kindly went and cleared them and all looking very neat now - thank you very much.

b) Routine Reports

- i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests**
Cllr. Meischke continues to carry-out the emergency escape lighting and manual alarm call tests on a monthly basis. He also 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. Smith completed the report on 8th March 2022 and said that the village looks very good.
 - **Sportsfield**
 - Grass – 1/3 grass, 1/3 plantain, 1/3 mud - good.
 - Bottles and packaging around new benches
 - Outfield ready for cutFrank Cooper be instructed to do this work. **Action: J. Allsop**
 - **Community Hall**
 - Doors facing car park need some cosmetic work
 - Grass weeds growing through paving slabs
 - **Tennis courts**
 - Resurfacing scheduled for court 'A;' court 'B' looks good.
 - Boundary fencing – field side bulging outwards where players bounce off it.
 - Court edge leaves need clearing and grass needs spraying.Frank Cooper be instructed to do this work. **Action: J. Allsop**Cllr. Smith ended his report saying that it was a pleasure walking around the village and through the Lammas.
- vi) Weekly sportsfield-report**
Nothing to report.
- vii) Weekly defibrillator inspection**
Cllr. Meischke said that an e-mail was received from the National Defibrillator Network, otherwise known as 'The Circuit,' to inform us that our defibrillator was used on 11th March and was now listed as unavailable. The e-mail went on to say that the ambulance service has recorded that someone was sent to fetch the defibrillator in an emergency, but this does not always mean that the defibrillator was used.
Cllr. Meischke checked the defibrillator, which showed that it had been taken out of its metal housing but had not been used. The Clerk then logged onto www.thecircuit.uk to update the defibrillator as working and available.

viii) **Website/Facebook**

None.

ix) **Highway issues**

None.

x) **Dog fouling reports**

None.

xi) **Police reports**

All Parish Councillors have been e-mailed PCSO Sally Brook's police report dated 15th March.

9. Correspondence received

None.

10. Village organisations

None.

11. Items for Parish News

Articles concerning the following items to be submitted for inclusion in the April edition of the Parish News.

- Queens' Platinum Jubilee celebrations
- Caretaker position
- First aid course update

Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop

The meeting closed at 2110.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 19th April 2022.