

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 2 June 2015, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

*Cllr Mrs S Bannerman (Vice Chairman)	*Cllr M P Keogh
*Cllr A Baxter	*Cllr R D Key
*Cllr T Baxter (Chairman)	*Cllr Mrs J Liversage
*Cllr S J Godfrey	*Cllr A J Young
*Cllr I Hunt	

* denotes present.

In attendance: 33 members of the public.
Cllr Devonshire (EHC)
Cllr McAndrew (HCC)
PCSO Karen Broad

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 19 May 2015 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Kettle Green Lane - Sign

The Clerk confirmed that a specification and quotation had been received to provide the new sign in the sum of £120 plus VAT.

Members authorised the Clerk to incur the expenditure and to arrange for the sign to be provided and erected.

(ii) Henry Moore Foundation

Continuing concerns were expressed concerning the damage to the roadside verges being caused by vehicles accessing from the north to the Henry Moore Foundation site. Whilst the Henry Moore Foundation had admitted to the damage being caused and, despite the assurance given at a recent meeting that the matter would be addressed, there would still not appear to be any control over the continual traffic ingressing and egressing the site.

The Chairman stated that he would arrange, as a matter of urgency, to meet with Mrs Wade, Henry Moore Foundation, and for Mr Bird and Cllr McAndrew to be in attendance.

(iii) Jolly Waggoners

An email had been received from Paul Dean, Principal Planning Enforcement Officer, which stated that he had recently visited the site and looked at the condition of the building and land. At this time he did not consider the condition of either would warrant the serving of a notice requiring the land to be cleared.

Cllr Devonshire had requested the Director of Development Control, Kevin Steptoe, to contact the owner of the site and Cllr Devonshire would report back on this matter.

(iv) Green Tye – Village Sign

It was noted that a letter had been forwarded to the Highways Liaison Officer (HCC) requesting a “Please drive carefully through our village” sign to be erected.

A response was awaited.

(v) Tennis Club

Cllr Mrs Bannerman reiterated the proposal which had been supported by members at the last meeting, viz:

“That the Tennis Club provide one hour per day from (say) 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm for a holiday membership for all children under 14 years of age during every school holiday.”

The Chairman referred to an email received from Justin in response to the Parish Council’s proposal in which it had been confirmed that the Tennis Club was operating a £15 youth holiday scheme, which allowed the courts to be used by local youths throughout the day. In addition, the school was now using the courts on two afternoons a week.

Cllr Mrs Bannerman stated that the Tennis Club had lost sight of the principle of the Parish Council's proposal for free use of the courts for the under 14s for one hour per day. The present proposal of the Tennis Club was a holiday membership for the sum of £15, which was totally unacceptable. The whole object was to encourage sporting facilities for the use of all the village children and the situation now presenting itself was a stand-off.

Cllr Mrs Bannerman stated that what the Tennis Club failed to realise was that the tennis courts were situated on land in the ownership of the Parish Council and the courts did not belong exclusively to the Tennis Club. In fact there would appear to be no reason why another Tennis Club could not be formed and be allowed the use of the facilities and there was already a move to start a new Tennis Club. The Parish Council could also consider taking over the courts and opening them up to a commercial tenderer or the Parish Council could take over the courts on a lease-back arrangement. Of interest was the fact that not all members of the Tennis Club had been consulted on the Parish Council's proposal and many were in favour of the Parish Council's proposal. However, the Tennis Club was not in favour. Clearly the Parish Council did not wish to be confrontational and it would wish to work towards an amicable solution with the Tennis Club.

Cllr Mrs Liversage felt that, despite the reluctance of the Tennis Club to meet with the Parish Council, members should press ahead and seek a meeting.

The Chairman concurred with the above and he agreed to write to the Tennis Club with a view to convening an early meeting with one or two of the Parish Council members being in attendance.

(vi) Financial Accounts

The Chairman informed members that the Clerk had supplied both him and Cllr Hunt with a written explanation as to the points raised at the last meeting. The explanation was such that the Chairman was now prepared to sign off the accounts.

(vii) Bank Mandate

Members had been handed the bank mandate documents with a request that they be completed and taken into the Bishop's Stortford branch of NatWest Bank.

(viii) Clerk's salary

The Chairman informed members that having discussed this matter with the former Chairman of the Parish Council, William Compton, it had been confirmed that with effect from 1 January 2015 the salary of the Clerk be on SP31 of the NJC Conditions of Service, ie £7,321.60 per annum.

5. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Much Hadham Fete

A request was made by a resident for volunteers to come forward to assist with running the fete. A meeting was scheduled to take place in the Village Hall at 8.00 pm on 3 June 2015 to discuss the fete and it was hoped that as many people as possible would attend and offer their services on the day.

(ii) Apology

A public apology was given to the Parish Council by a former resident of Much Hadham in connection with the recent remarks he had made on Facebook concerning a Parish Council matter.

Members wholeheartedly accepted his apology with gratitude.

(iii) Pavilion

A resident referred to the decision of the Council to embark on the current refurbishment of the pavilion and she questioned the lack of information given to the public concerning the financial aspects of the project.

The Chairman responded by citing minutes of the Parish Council meetings held in January and February 2015, which, in essence, had set out details of the tenders received and he re-affirmed how the Parish Council intended to finance the project. The meeting was reminded that the lowest tender had been that received from Glenplan Ltd in the sum of £114,000 which had been accepted. It was intended to finance this project by way of utilising the New Homes Bonus money (£10,039), Earmarked Reserve (£30,000) and possibly receipt of Section 106 money (£12,364) coming from the Moor Place development. In the event of the latter not being forthcoming, the shortfall was being financed by an £80,000 loan secured from the Public Works Loan Board. The Chairman stated that Government approval had been secured for the loan, which would be repaid over a 20-year period at a rate of 3.08%. Half yearly payments would amount to £2,693.73 payable on 20 May and 20 November in each year. The intention of the Council was to seek grant aid towards reducing the debt and to this end fundraising was well under way.

Cllr Mrs Bannerman stated that, if the loan had not been taken up, either the total cost of the project would have had to have been met from the precept, which would have been unpalatable to the electorate, or the project would not have been able to proceed.

The resident stated that any premature payment would incur a penalty which she stated could be extremely expensive incurring the parish with an unnecessary debt.

A further question was raised as to whether the Parish Council had made any provision for an overspend on the contract. The resident was told that the contract was fully on target both practically and financially and there was every confidence that there would be no overspend.

(iv) Parish magazine

The Chairman stated that members had expressed a concern that no advertising appeared in the magazine, which was not only a financial loss to the publication, but denied potential traders from advertising their services.

Therefore, it was felt that every effort should be made to explore how best this could be addressed.

(v) Bus shelter opposite Red Lion

Members' attention was drawn to the condition of the wooden tiles which were rotten and in need of replacing.

(vi) Fencing at the Burial Ground

A resident referred to the poor state of the fencing to the right of the front entrance to the burial ground and he requested that remedial work be undertaken.

(vii) Recreation Ground

Members were informed that the recreation ground had been open to the public and maintained by the Sports Association for over 60 years. During which time the pavilion had been used as a regular base by the Football Clubs. Both teams had been very successful and a question was raised as to whether the Parish Council had a problem with the use of the pavilion by the Football Clubs.

The Chairman stated that the Parish Council had no such problem. However, the Parish Council did wish to see the pavilion run on a more professional basis and to be financially viable. He stated that the pavilion was a parish asset and it was the Council's intention to widen the scope of its activities in order for it to feature more prominently as a parish facility.

(viii) Village Hall

Cllr Key expressed his concern regarding the proposed repair work to the facia of the Village Hall at a cost of £10,000, which he felt to be an exorbitant sum and totally unnecessary. On an inspection of the premises it would appear that the facia was solid and showed no signs of disrepair. Cllr Key requested sight of the breakdown of the work proposed prior to any decision being taken. Cllr Mrs Liversage confirmed that she had requested this information and Roger would be happy to discuss this with Cllr Key.

The Chairman stated that the Village Hall operated much on the same lines as the Sports Association in that in the past the organisations had been left more or less to their own devices with no direct involvement by the Parish Council. The Council was now more pro-active and, whilst not wanting to 'take over', nevertheless, wished to see greater transparency.

Cllr Mrs Liversage stated that it was important to recognise the work of the individuals running both the Village Hall and the Sports Association, who were working on behalf of the community and the Parish Council did not want to create an aggressive situation.

Members took on board the sentiments expressed.

6. PLANNING

Minutes of Planning Sub-Committee held on 19 May 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee held on 19 May 2015 be received.

7. HIGHWAYS MATTERS

(i) General

Cllr Hunt gave his report on the highways issues relating to the parish as contained in the attached appendix A.

(ii) Vehicle activated sign

Cllr Key referred to an email which he had received from a local resident drawing attention to the excessive speed of traffic through the village and requesting that the proposal to site vehicular activated signs, previously proposed for Much Hadham and rejected, be revisited.

Cllr Key had responded setting out the history behind the proposal and the reason for rejection by the County Council. The sign for the northern end of the village had been rejected out of hand and agreement could not be reached on the siting of the southern sign which the Parish Council had wanted sited near the former Jolly Waggoners Public House.

The Chairman referred to an email which he had received from Cllr McAndrew which confirmed that a series of traffic surveys which had been carried out in 2011 had confirmed the average speed of traffic through the village ranged from 30 mph to 36 mph and only one person had been injured along the route in 2013, which was not sufficient evidence for vehicular activated signs to be considered at the time, as the required criteria had not been met.

Members were sceptical as to the recorded speeds, which they felt had increased over the years. They questioned what could be done to provide information on the current speed of the traffic, which could be used to open up new discussions with the County Council.

PCSO Karen Broad referred to the Smiley Face campaign which was a means whereby volunteers undertook to record speed data from a hand-held device. The recorded information would be forwarded to the Traffic Management Team to assess. A minimum of four volunteers would be required to operate the scheme, which would be deployed at designated locations following a site assessment.

Members were keen to progress this matter and initially to seek a nucleus of volunteers.

8. PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP

Cllr A Baxter informed members that notification had been received that a large tree had come down on FP32, Perry Green, and, in addition, the two bridges on the footpath were in need of repair. Both these matters had been referred to Nicholas Maddex, Herts County Council Rights of Way Officer.

Cllr Baxter further reported that Nicholas Maddex had been in touch with the developers of Moor Place and the previously blocked footpath was now open.

No further matters were reported.

9. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Cllr Devonshire made the following comments:

- He confirmed that he was in communication with Liz Aston, Planning Officer, East Herts Council, with regard to the Section 106 agreement in respect of the development of Moor Place.
- He referred to the grant procedure and he reminded the meeting that all applications submitted to the District Council required his support and approval.
- He confirmed that he would be meeting with the Henry Moore Foundation on 12 June 2015 with regard to the traffic issues.

Cllr Mc Andrew made the following comments:

- He stated that he was arranging to meet with Cllr Hunt and Cllr Key and an officer of the County Council to discuss how to jointly move forward on matters of concern. Following this initial meeting he would like to arrange a meeting with Highways for both Councillors to meet up with the team.
- He also suggested monthly meetings with Ringway as a way of formulating an effective working relationship between the Parish Council and the Highways Authority.

10. PAVILION UPDATE

Cllr Mrs Bannerman confirmed that the project was on schedule and it was envisaged that work would be completed in time for the fete. Arrangements were being made for an official opening and for a “ribbon cutting” ceremony to be performed by two randomly chosen local children.

In view of the large capital expenditure for the project, members felt very strongly that the newly refurbished pavilion should be well managed for the good of the community and be financially viable. To this end a separate Pavilion Committee was in the process of being set up with Mr John Carey assuming the role of Chairman. The Committee would comprise two Parish Council representatives, three residents of the village and two members of the existing Sports Field Association. The brief of the Committee would be to honour the legal obligations as set out in the 1947 Conveyance to ensure that access to the recreation ground and the pavilion was for the benefit of all the parishioners at all times. All efforts would be made to ensure that expenditure on the day-to-day running of the pavilion would be met from the fees levied on the regular users and from casual bookings.

With regard to the running of the pavilion it was envisaged that a Booking Secretary, Caretaker and Cleaner would be engaged. Administrative functions, ie banking, insurance, security, etc, would be addressed as part of the overall strategic plan for the building. The general ethos was engagement with the public and it was hoped that this would be the theme for ensuring the future success of the building.

Cllr Mrs Bannerman gave details of the sponsorship arrangements which had been put in place and elaborated on the “buy a brick” campaign. Corporate sponsorship and individual sponsorship was also being pursued.

Cllr Young informed members that he was actively researching various grant making outlets and he would be exploring the possibility of seeking grant aid from the Football Federation.

11. HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION

This matter had been referred to in “Residents’ Comments”.

12. PARISH COUNCIL NOTICE BOARDS

Members were reminded that there was a need for a lock to be placed on one of the Parish Council’s notice board situated at the Village Hall.

Cllr Godfrey agreed to action.

13. WEBSITE

In view of the difficulties which would appear to be apparent in securing advertising in the Parish magazine, it was suggested that the possibility of advertising via the Parish Council’s website be investigated. Cllr A Baxter agreed to action.

With regard to the content of the website and, in particular, the Council minutes, Cllr Hunt asked whether an audit could be carried out as to what documentation was on the site and he suggested that, in future, draft minutes be included. Members re-affirmed the Council's previous decision in that it was opposed to draft minutes being included.

14. RIVER ASH CLEANLINESS

The Chairman stated that the River Ash was an environmental asset and one of the very few chalk streams in Hertfordshire with an abundance of wildlife. From an inspection it would appear the river through the parish was dead. Therefore, there was a very great need to insure that the bed of the river was regularly cleared of all overgrown vegetation.

The Chairman stated that he had been liaising with Mr Peter Illston on the cleanliness and he thanked him for his contribution.

The Chairman and Cllr Godfrey agreed to liaise on this matter with a view to ascertaining the work involved.

15. PARISH COUNCIL MAGAZINE

This matter had been discussed under "Residents' Comments".

16. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Hunt referred members to the attached document (see Appendix B) which he read out for the benefit of the public present.

Cllr Devonshire stated that he had a copy of the Silver Leys Neighbourhood Plan which he would provide for the members. Cllr Young stated that this was now a brilliant opportunity for the parish to secure its needs for the future and he stated that support for the Plan would require a broad commitment from the community.

Details of the Neighbourhood Plan and its future commitment would be placed on the website in the hope that as many people as possible would offer their services in support.

RESOLVED:

1. to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Much Hadham;
2. that this Plan be for the whole parish;
3. to establish a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to lead on the formulation of the NDP;
4. to formally submit an application to East Herts Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area pursuant to the preparation of NDP in the form on the attached draft (see Appendix B).

17. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts as set out on the attached statement (see Appendix C) be duly authorised for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

The Clerk stated that as the loan of £80,000 had only been received into the bank very recently and without an up-to-date bank statement, he had been unable to produce a financial statement. However, when the necessary documentations was to hand the statement would be forwarded onto all members.

18. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS, AUDITOR'S REPORT AND ANNUAL RETURN

The Chairman reaffirmed his earlier remark that the Clerk had satisfactorily addressed the issues raised at the last meeting by Cllr Hunt.

RESOLVED that the above document be approved and signed by the Chairman.

19. URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr Mrs Liversage reported that there was an abandoned car in the Village Hall car park and steps were being taken to seek its removal.

20. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

- (i) Risk Assessments.
- (ii) Invitation to Mark Prisk, MP.

With regard to item (ii) above, the Chairman informed the meeting that both he and Cllr Mrs Bannerman had recently met with Mark Prisk, MP, at his office in Harlow and had had an excellent meeting with him with a wide range of topics being discussed. Mr Prisk, MP, had confirmed that he would make every effort to attend future Annual meetings of the Council and, subject to commitments, he would try to attend the meetings of the Council during the parliamentary recess period.

21. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 7 July 2015, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.30 pm.