

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 6th February 2018, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, Green Room, at 7:30 pm.

*Cllr W Compton

*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chairman)

*Cllr B Morris

*Cllr Mrs M O'Neill

*Cllr W O'Neill

*Cllr C Thompson

*Cllr K Twort

*Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chairman)

Cllr Mrs J Liversage

* denotes present.

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and 6 members of the public.

18/15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs J Liversage.

18/16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in a cheque to be approved under agenda item 18/26(i) and therefore would not be voting on the motion to approve the payments. No other declarations made.

18/17. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

Cllr B Morris suggested that the Clerk should record the meeting in order to ensure that accurate minutes are produced. The Chairman reminded those present that the minutes were not a verbatim record of discussions but a record of decisions and the context surrounding them.

18/18. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- agenda item 18/24 would be taken before 18/23;
- The Bull Inn would be opening towards the end of February with a new Landlord, Susanne Mead, following completion of works to bring the building up to the required standards;
- the base of information being published on the Parish Council Twitter account is being broadened and everyone is encouraged to follow it; and

- those present were reminded that if a resident wishes to speak on an item prior to the 'residents' comments' agenda item, raise a hand to alert the Chairman or the Clerk.

The Chairman then welcomed Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Leon de Bruyn.

Leon introduced himself, highlighting that his previous experience was within town centres and that he now covers a wide rural area including Much Hadham. The key points made were:

- contactable via leon.debruyn@herts.pnn.police.uk or the Buntingford Police Station;
- 1 reported crime recently of unwanted lead removed from a driveway in Station Road with a suspicious vehicle being seen prior to that, so a reminder to report any suspicious vehicles to the Police;
- more widely, successive burglaries in Bishop's Stortford (5 in one afternoon) where high performance vehicles and jewellery were targeted, and the theft of 4 caravans from a caravan park in High Wych; and
- if anyone would like to be signed up to the OWL network for alerts or receive advice e.g. for installing CCTV etc, then contact him.

Finally, Leon queried whether speeding was an issue in Much Hadham with a positive response received. During the discussion, reference was made to the "Drive Safe" campaign and an illegal 'average speed check' sign at the southern end of the village. In addition, a resident from the hamlets highlighted that he is currently corresponding with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) regarding dealing with speeding within the hamlets. Further information on this to be provided to Leon.

18/19. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9th January 2018 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

In terms of the 10 year plan for Public Rights of Way, produced by Herts County Council, Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) to be asked why the Parish Council was not consulted with directly in respect of this.

18/20. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

Report on outstanding matters and resolutions noted. Any items requiring comment are included elsewhere on the agenda.

The Clerk highlighted that the cost associated with the replacement of 3 street lights would be updated from £10,029.97 + VAT to £8,832.30 + VAT in the next version.

Cllr B Morris referred to the completion of the Kettle Green Lane repairs with section 106 monies whereupon it was highlighted that an update would be provided at agenda item 18/21(iii).

18/21. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Village Hall

Cllr W O'Neill reported that the next meeting of the Village Hall Management Committee was on the 22nd February.

Sports Association/Pavilion

Cllr Mrs M O'Neill reported that various minor repairs had been made to the Pavilion: in relation to the guttering, the power supply and mending locks. It was also reported that the outside toilet is vandalised on occasions.

Cllr K Twort stated that there was nothing to report as the Sports Association had not met recently.

(ii) Environment (inc Public Rights of Way (PROW))

Public Rights of Way

Cllr B Morris read out his report (Appendix A).

The Chairman provided an update in respect of changing the definitive map relating to Footpath 5, at the top of New Barns Lane. Research on the usage of the footpath is still continuing as little evidence has been received for or against the proposed change.

Cllr B Morris was asked whether he'd been able to progress the matter raised by a resident of a slippery wooden bridge on the footpath leading to the pumping station. The Clerk was asked to resend the email.

Cllr W O'Neill reported that a further tree had fallen on Footpath 25 as well as trees being blown over in Bluebell woods, a number of which are leaning on other trees.

In addition, Cllr B Morris reported that he'd undertaken some investigations in relation to the 10 year plan for Public Rights of Way referred to at the last meeting. Consultation for this was undertaken via Herts Association of Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC) on the 23rd March but the consultation document was never forwarded to him. The scheme is an on-going one meaning that suggestions can be made at anytime and by anybody, with the intention that it is a reflection of current usage and not just based on historic usage.

(iii) Highways

Cllr W O'Neill reported on the following matters:

- B1004 will be closed at some point in the next 18 months, between Malting Lane and Ash Meadow, for essential work on the water supply system;
- suggestion for solar powered speed restricting signs from a resident has been sent to Herts County Council for consideration;
- concern for the state of the roads in the hamlets is being taken forward;
- still unknown when the promised improvements to Kettle Green Lane will be undertaken;
- the poor standard of work carried out in Church Lane, as highlighted by residents, has been reported to Herts County Council;
- street lighting project continues and currently waiting for installation dates for the 3 new lights; and
- consideration being given to enlarging or redesigning The Bull Inn carpark so that more vehicles can be accommodated.

Finally, parishioners are encouraged to reduce their use of cars by cycling and walking more which would help traffic management in a number of ways, particularly given that there is no funding for more expensive solutions to the traffic problems.

In respect of the speeding issue, it was agreed to establish a working party to progress this consisting of Cllrs W O'Neill and C Thompson, and the person who put the illegal sign up at the southern end of the village would be invited to join once identified. A report will be provided back to the next meeting.

(iv) Media

None.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that the Steering Group have met a number of times to ensure that work continues on completing the remaining tasks. Although there are issues to overcome before any announcement, the Steering Group is quietly confident that sites have been identified to meet the minimum target of 54 new houses.

Through an event on Community-Led Housing later this month, Cllr I Hunt hopes to pursue the possibility of creating almshouses for the 21st century within the context of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Following a request from Cllr W Compton, Cllr I Hunt agreed to provide a list of the 23 houses with planning permission that contribute to the minimum target of 54 new houses.

(vi) Security

In the absence of Cllr Mrs J Liversage there was no report.

(vii) Other

None.

18/22. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that he'd just been at the Extraordinary East Herts Council meeting that discussed the main modifications to the draft District Plan following the Planning Inspector's report. These modifications will now be consulted upon for 6 weeks. 3 paper copies will be provided to the Parish Council but the documentation will also be available at Council offices and libraries as well as online.

In terms of the modifications, overall, there is stronger wording throughout. The two major changes are:

- to add the words "at least" in front of the house numbers in town centres – which now brings it in line with that already stated for villages; and
- the introduction of "master planning" to significant sites as well as large sites.

For clarity, master planning was explained as developers meeting groups of Cllrs/officers prior to a planning application being submitted to enable the developer to be encouraged to design a site in a certain way.

The final point made was that East Herts Council now has a 6 year housing supply. The benefit of this is that inappropriate planning applications, for example Dolan's Field, can be refused as the housing supply is greater than 5 years.

Cllr I Hunt reflected upon this in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan. Opportunities for developers to propose sites outside of the village boundary no longer exist. Until the Neighbourhood Plan is in place, all development has to be contained within the existing village boundary and the Parish Council now has until March 2021 to deliver its Neighbourhood Plan. However, the intention is to have the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan sooner rather than later.

Following a question from Cllr B Morris regarding development within the village boundary and the Barn School site being the preferred site but outside of the boundary, Cllr I Hunt clarified that the "preferred site" status is from the result of the September 2017 public consultation. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does not have any preferred sites as yet.

There was no report from Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) as he was not present but had given his apologies.

18/24. DOLAN'S FIELD

Cllr I Hunt explained the purpose of this agenda item. Following planning permission being refused for Dolan's Field, solicitors appointed by Chaldean Properties contacted the Clerk to propose a £500,000 payment to the Parish Council for the Village Hall, contingent on the planning appeal being successful.

The proposal, a Unilateral Undertaking, is usually approved by East Herts Council and Herts County Council. It is unusual to involve the Parish Council as it does not have the capacity to agree to such an undertaking. A proposed response, declining to approve the undertaking, was circulated and agreed by Cllrs and subsequently sent to Chaldean Properties' solicitors, which has been noted by them.

18/23. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Roads through the hamlets

A resident referred to the offer of funding by Cllr G McAndrew (HCC), reported in the February Parish Magazine, and his attempts to obtain this for road improvements in the hamlets. Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council, with representatives from the hamlets, would facilitate a further meeting with Herts County Council and Cllr G McAndrew (HCC).

(ii) Old Station Yard

Following reference to the planning appeal in respect of Old Station Yard, where the resident considered it should be rejected, the Chairman confirmed that the proposed Parish Council's response to the appeal would be discussed at the Planning Committee meeting shortly.

18/25. RISK REGISTER

The risk register had been circulated prior to the meeting and, as a result of feedback received, the Clerk highlighted that the following changes would be made:

- inclusion of a specific risk in respect of the burial ground, particularly in relation to headstones, together with the arrangements in place to mitigate this;
- in relation to setting the precept, adding a comment to reflect that consideration is also given to the level of appropriate reserves to hold;
- including within "for payments excluding salaries" details of the processes surrounding the reimbursement of Cllr expenses;
- reference to be made to the grants policy in place;
- whilst assets are detailed within the insurance documents, a separate asset register is required therefore the risk to be reassessed as medium; and
- to consider the risks associated with the website, Twitter etc.

Cllr B Morris queried whether the insurance provision for the Pavilion etc had been reviewed prior to renewal to ensure adequate. The Clerk indicated that this would have been undertaken by the Sports Association and she would follow this up.

Subject to the above changes being made, RESOLVED to approve the Parish Council risk register.

18/26. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not vote due to the declared interest.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - FEBRUARY 2018

Chq	Payable to	For	Amount
832	Lynne Mills	Website costs (NP)	135.73
833	MH Bowls Club	Room hire for 3 meetings (NP)	45.00
834	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	109.67
835	MH Sports Association	Insurance costs for Pavilion, Sports Pavilion & Equipment shed	1,077.16
836	Ian Hunt	Surveys, printing, poster tubes, blu tac, magazine subscription (NP) + Pavilion expenses (£19.74 excl VAT)	376.53
837	Ruth Fleetwood	Project Manager (NP)	160.00
Total payments			<u>1,904.09</u>

Cheques will be signed and despatched at the conclusion of the meeting. Cllr I Hunt did not sign the cheque payable to himself.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2017/18 was received with no matters to highlight.

18/27. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9th January 2018 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

18/28. BURIAL AUTHORITY

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 9th January 2018 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

18/29. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

18/30. CLERK'S INFORMATION

Having received information from the Parish Council's external auditor – PKF – the Clerk highlighted that the Annual Return has not changed much from the 2016/17 financial year. Majority of the submission will be electronic and the deadline has been brought forward to the 11th June. If the Parish Council, on a risk assessment basis, is selected for an intermediate review, this will be known in March and will involve additional work.

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the Annual Return will be approved at the May meeting as the Internal Audit review is being arranged for the week commencing 9th April.

18/31. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 6th March 2018, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall, Green Room.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:43 pm.

Public Rights of Way

MHPC Public Meeting 6 February 2018

Staff from both the Access and Rights of Way team and the Countryside Management Service are currently being merged into a new team which will be called the Countryside and Rights of Way service.

This will see an alignment of synergies and there is apparently already a greater involvement of volunteers in the management and improvement of the Rights of Way network.

In the short term this may result in a few delays to works while the changes are worked through.

BR 54: The contractor has just cleared nettles.

BR 52: Vehicle damage. Solicitors advice presently is to await a response from the Landowners solicitor. I have confirmed there has never to my knowledge been a problem with joyriders or 4x4 off road vehicles on this PRow. Inspections of the surface suggest the damage is likely to have been caused by much larger vehicles, and, indeed that smaller vehicle would have quickly become grounded due to the state of the route. Nearby residents (and that includes myself) would have reported to the Police any illegal activity. If any member of the public sees off road bikes, off road vehicles on the land would they please report it to the Police.

FP 22: The application for a diversion order through school is being processed. It looks as if this may have to go to a local public inquiry, as not all the objections have been withdrawn. Prior to this, quotations for improvements to the proposed new route are being sought, to maximise the chance of a successful outcome.

A meeting was held with the Chief Executive of St. Elizabeth's School and Home at South End. It was explained suggestions from residents (and indeed the farmer) were received that the stile on this path at the entrance to the site should be removed, as it is redundant and an inconvenience. He resisted this suggestion, and so it was agreed to defer its removal until other options were considered. The vegetation has been removed from it so that it can be used more easily. At this meeting the Chief Executive asked if the FP could be diverted or, preferably, extinguish the path, as it creates safety concerns. The processes involved were explained, but he was informed him any extinguishment, or a diversion onto the local roads, which would effectively be the same thing, would be unlikely to succeed. Any diversion which sought to move the path around the whole of their estate would most likely receive objections, due the much increased length. The site was walked to look at other possible, slightly shorter, options.

FP56: I have put the owners of the new house next to Old Park Farm on notice that his fence is blocking the footpath and he is considering applying for a diversion.

FP10: I am told the occupants of Dell Cottage have taken over instructing Sworders on the diversion of footpath 10 through their garden, as Foxleys Builders are now in receivership or some such situation. Revised drawings from Sworders have passed to the Road Safety Audit. However, they have suggested that Sworders first agree their scheme with Highways to avoid yet more to-ing and fro-ing. The latest scheme still includes permissive paths parallel to Kettle Green Road and a circuit slightly further north.

BR 7: The dangerous trees beside Cox's Lane have been removed by Hopleys at their expense. The contractor has been asked to clear low branches and trash from the stream as may be the County Council's responsibility.

FP 13: Sworders have been asked to confirm who is currently responsible for the crops obstructing the path but given Foxley's situation, there has been no response.

FP 11: The new owners have not interfered with any part of the footpath in this section with their new fencing. Confirmation of this is being sent to the owners.

FP 26: Highways have promised to write to MHPC regarding the suggestion of installing a sealed surface on part of it.

FP 40: A ramp up onto the new part of the bridge has been completed. The contractors have advised that the surface of this route where it meets Ducketts Lane was badly damaged by farm traffic before they carried out the work. They have agreed to return when conditions are suitable to repair it, at their cost.

RB 60: The modification application for a new route through the farmyard at Buckler's Hall Farm has now resulted in a confirmed order for a restricted byway, to be known as "RB60". Signs will be erected shortly.

BR 49 AND 17: The bridle gates on now all appear satisfactory, and there have been no further problems with the cattle there.

BHAM