

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 5 January 2016, in the Much Hadham Village Hall at 7.30 pm.

*Cllr I Hunt
*Cllr Mrs J Liversage
*Cllr Mrs P Taylor
*Cllr A J Young

* denotes present.

In attendance: 29 members of the public.
Plus Cllr Devonshire (EHC)

1. APPOINTMENT OF ACTING CHAIRMAN

Members confirmed that Cllr Young continue as Acting Chairman in the interim period until the Council had a full complement of members. Cllr Mrs Taylor was confirmed as the Acting Vice Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr McAndrew (HCC).

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that it had been very reassuring to have received support from his fellow Councillors, representatives of the Sports Association and the Village Hall, together with the support of past Councillors Blaise Morris, Selina Bannerman and Tony Baxter, for which he was extremely grateful. There was a very true feeling that the Parish Council and the community could now work together to a common agenda. It was recognised that the present Council was operating as an interim administration. However, as an election to fill the 5 vacancies was due to take place on 18 February this situation would only be transient.

The Chairman further stated that he was committed to three aims

- (i) To resolve the differences between the Parish Council, the Sports Association and the Village Hall Committee and to secure an end to the conflicts of the past.
- (ii) To ensure that the Parish Council was viable and meeting its obligations.
- (iii) To secure the finances to ensure the provision of a stable platform for the future Council.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 1 December 2015 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Section 106 Agreement

The Chairman was pleased to inform members that the Section 106 money (£12,810) had now been received and Cllr Devonshire was thanked for his efforts in expediting the payment.

7. PORTFOLIOS - RESTRUCTURE

The Chairman stated that, despite a considerable reduction in the number of members following the recent spate of resignations, the existing members had managed to cover all the various portfolios (see attached appendix A). The work now involved would put added pressure on the remaining members. Nevertheless, the Chairman was confident that the work of the Council would be carried out expeditiously and he expressed his gratitude to the level of support he and his fellow Councillors had received from the community at large.

8. FIBRE OPTIC BROADBAND – UPDATE FROM BT OPENREACH

Cllr Hunt stated that fibre Optic Broadband was the single most important issue for the longterm future of the parish would become an essential basic utility providing super fast speeds for all internet needs.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Mr Giles Ellerton from OpenReach to give a short presentation. The bullet points emanating from the presentation were as follows:

- The BT solution is for fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) leaving in place the existing copper cable to each household.
- Currently speeds of up to 50MB/s were being offered with the potential for between 300-500 MB/s over the next 10 years. It was recognised that the Gigaclear solution – Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) – offered faster solutions at a price.
- Currently 90% of households enjoyed the facility.
- The service would be obtainable by purchase through a service provider, eg Open Reach, Gigaclear, Virgin Media, etc, with potential recipients having to sign up with their chosen provider.
- Open Reach currently had a contract with Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils to deliver FTTC by the end of 2018. Ninety-five percent of households in Hertfordshire would have access under the “Connected Counties Scheme” by September 2017 and 98% by June 2018.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr Ellerton was thanked for his attendance following which Standing Orders were reinstated.

9. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Sports Association

The Chairman stated that the Pavilion Committee no longer existed following the resignation of all of its members. At the present time the pavilion administration and maintenance remained under the control of the Parish Council with the support of the Sports Association. Currently the Parish Council representatives on the Sports Association were Cllr Young and Cllr Mrs Liversage.

During the preceding months there had been a great deal of conflict and animosity between the Sports Association and the Parish Council, which was deeply regretted and it was the intention to open up meaningful dialogue with the Sports Association in order to build bridges and to move forward in a positive way.

In the future a joint statement would be produced explaining the aspirations of the Parish Council in relation to the recreation ground and pavilion. This would be a working document addressing all the problems, which had been raised in the past and would act as a vision for the future. This document would be compiled jointly between the Parish Council and the Sports Association.

Following on from the joint statement, the Parish Council would work with the Sports Association to produce a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) that would address the various issues that had been raised by parishioners over the course of the last year. This would include the rights and responsibilities of the Parish Council, the Sports Association and the various clubs that used the facilities on the recreation ground.

(ii) Pavilion

(a) General

Cllr Hunt stated that the Council's finances had been restructured and the Council was well placed to make the first loan reductions.

(b) Fire Risk Assessment

Cllr Hunt informed members that a Fire Risk Assessment report had been commissioned, a copy of which had been provided to members. Cllr Hunt stated that in the report two matters had been raised which required attention, viz: the side changing room door was sticking and was hard to open and the fire extinguisher required to be wall mounted.

Both of the above matters had been actioned.

Other matters of concern had been identified and a four page maintenance schedule had been drawn up.

There was a major problem concerning the shower drainage, which was resulting in water, after use by patrons, flooding onto the floor. As an interim solution the flow

rate had been adjusted and it remained to be seen whether this had rectified the problem.

(iii) Highways

The Chairman stated that he would be arranging a meeting shortly between Cllr Devonshire (EHC), Hertfordshire Highways and the Parish Council to discuss the parking problems being experienced in the village.

Other matters raised:

- Church Lane – The questions concerning the road narrowing had been taken on board by Cllr McAndrew.
- Gulley cleansing – A number of the gulleys in the Parish were blocked. HCC would be running a programme in the New Year to implement a programme of drain clearance. A comprehensive list of blocked gulleys had been sent to HCC for action. Thanks were due to Bill Bird, Ken Howlett and Blaise Morris for their assistance in compiling the list.
- Salt delivery – The Hertfordshire County Council had delivered 34 25kg bags of salt to the home of Cllr Mrs Liversage. Anyone requiring a supply was asked to contact Cllr Mrs Liversage to arrange collection.
- Street lighting – Broadfield Way, Windmill Way and Millers View were all working well. Two new faults had been reported at the top of Station Road and on Oudle Lane.
- Street lighting – There was a long standing unresolved issue in Church Lane with both columns. This had been attributable to an underground cable issue. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Mr Martin Dillon for his input in monitoring the situation.
- Since the last meeting, the Clerk had provided members with a list of the 47 lamp columns in the ownership of the Parish Council. A full stock-take of the Council's assets would be undertaken once the new Council was fully operational.

(iv) Parish Paths Partnership

(a) General

- FP 26 – Tarmac surface – Congregational Church – East Herts Council was chasing Ringway to effect a repair.
- FP 22 – All objections had now been resolved.
- FP 25 – Old School House to opposite the ford – Two trees needed cutting back – one had fallen across the footpath.
- FP 11 – Diversion Order – The Parish Council had raised no objections.

(b) Modification Order

An application had been received by the County Council to record the route which ran approximately 30m in a south-easterly direction to meet MH 41 and then in a general north-easterly direction to a junction with MH 45 as a Restricted Byway. The County

Council would act impartially in this matter by gather and assessing all available evidence.

RESOLVED that no objection be raised on the proposed Order.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hunt gave an update on the Neighbourhood Plan. A meeting of the Steering Group had taken place on 8 December with a view to refining the first survey to be distributed to householders in the Parish. A public consultation would be arranged for a date in March which could also be a forum for other matters of concern/interest to resident, eg Fibre Optic Broadband.

(vi) Village Hall

Cllr Mrs Liversage informed members that she had attended a meeting of the Village Hall Managers on 10 December 2015 and the following matters had been raised:

- Need to chase reimbursement of the insurance of the Village Hall.
- Disappointment expressed at the attitude of the Parish Council towards the Village Hall Managers.
- The Parish Council had not booked the hall for its Annual Parish meeting. This could be a forum for holding the annual meeting for both organisations on the same evening, as used to be the case.

Concerns had been raised regarding the ongoing maintenance of the hall and a meeting had taken place on 28 December 2015 with John Clarke, Cllr Devonshire and members of the Parish Council/Village Hall Committee to review the situation and to identify the issues that needed attention. Following the meeting, John Clarke, supported by Cllr Devonshire, had agreed to provide a schedule of work required, together with costings. The report would be considered by the Village Hall Committee in conjunction with the Council and a course of action would be agreed.

The Chairman stated that the items identified would need to be advised to the Village Hall Managers. However, as the Parish Council owned the building it should work in harmony with the Village Hall Managers to address the issues. The Chairman also stated that funding the maintenance would need to be a matter for sensible discussion.

(vii) Other – Website

Cllr Mrs Taylor was pleased to report that the website was now fully operational.

10. STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

East Herts Council was now commencing an informal stakeholders consultation on the draft conclusions of the Round 3 Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). The purpose of the consultation was to assess the potential suitability of sites for future development. It was important to note that the exercise was to establish whether the sites identified could be suitable for development not whether they should be developed.

The draft SLAA rejected the development of land outside the village boundary (the built environment), but consideration would be given to what emerged from the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. As some sites on the periphery could potentially be developed as follows:

- Station Yard (Millers View off Windmill Way).
- Allotment site (land west of Hodges Garage).
- New Barns Lane (west of North Leys).

On the face of it, it would seem that the information contained in the Consultation refuted the suggestions made by members of the public and Councillors at earlier meetings that the District Council wished to see land bordering Kettle Green Lane developed to accommodate potentially, in excess of 200 homes, as in the SLAA report it is stated, “the scale of the development proposed would be inappropriate representing an unacceptable incursion into the countryside setting of the village”. Consequently, contrary to what had been implied it would seem that the Much Hadham housing provision target of 10% might be maintained and not the large scale development previously talked about.

Members noted that comments on the consultation document were required before 31 January 2016 and they RESOLVED to review the contents of the document prior to formulating a response.

11. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT EAST HERTS ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY 2015

Members had been circulated with copy correspondence from East Herts Council (Environmental Services) relating to the above. The current Environmental Crime Policy adopted by the Council in 2016 was now being updated to reflect the environmental changes which had taken place since 2006. The consultation period ran until 24 January 2016.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

12. RESIDENTS’ COMMENTS

- Ex-Councillor Tony Baxter expressed his concern that on visiting the website a section of his resignation speech had been omitted and he sought an explanation. The Chairman agreed to look into the matter.
- Ex-Councillor Key likewise expressed his concern that part of his resignation speech was also missing. The Chairman agreed to look into the matter.
- A question was raised as to the plans the Parish Council had for ensuring the return of cricket on the recreation ground. The Chairman stated that there was no doubt in his mind that the overwhelming desire of the community was to see the return of cricket and it was the Parish Council’s aim that this should be brought about as soon as was practical. The Chairman made a request that anyone, who had any suggestions as to how this could be brought about, make their views known to members. The Parish Council was working with the Sports Association concerning this matter in order to expedite this request.

- Concern was expressed regarding Church Lane and the work undertaken by the occupier of the newly constructed dwelling. The Lane had been narrowed by kerbing, wooden posts had been erected and a permanent access had been constructed - all without permission. The Parish Council was urged to engage the owner in conversation with a view to the obstacles being removed. The Chairman stated that this matter was being pursued with the Herts County Council and the suggestion to meet with the owner would be taken on board.
- A resident was delighted to note that the Council was meeting with representatives of the Sports Association and the Village Hall and that meaningful dialogue had been initiated. However, she sought an assurance that the assets of the Parish were fully investigated by the Council's solicitor and within the investigation the conduct of the Management of the Sports Association and the retention for private use of the Bowls and Tennis Club be clarified. The Chairman stated that the legal status of the assets of the Parish Council were ambiguous and there would be a need to address the various issues. However, the Council was not rushing to Solicitors at the present time. Discussions would be taking place with the Sports Association with a view to agreeing a formal document which would be developed consensually. Only when this document was in place would there be recourse to Solicitors.
- A resident expressed her concern regarding the repair work undertaken to the pavilion door, which had been identified in the Fire Risk Assessment. Damage had been caused to the door by the attempted repair and an assurance was sought that action would be taken to rectify the problem.

13. COUNTY COUNCIL AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORTS

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Devonshire referred to the following matters:

(i) Planning

Cllr Devonshire referred to the Station Road development which was outside the village boundary and contravened two of the Policies contained within the District Plan and was stated in the draft SLAA to be currently unsuitable for development.

(ii) "Clean for the Queen" Campaign

Cllr Devonshire stated that there was a marked absence of litter in the village and the more pressing problem was that of compacted leaves which the District Council would not pick up. Cllr Devonshire was seeking to pursue this matter with a view to the District Council undertaking a clean-up operation.

(iii) Village Hall

Cllr Devonshire expressed his gratitude to John Clarke for all his efforts in connection with the recent meeting to discuss the maintenance requirements of the Village Hall and for John's agreement to produce a schedule of work to be undertaken.

(iv) Consultation on the Draft East Herts Environmental Committee's Enforcement Policies

Reference was made to the above consultation document and Cllr Devonshire drew members attention to the fact that under the new Policy where an owner of a dog failed to pick up faeces and/or failed to have the means to pick up after a dog a fixed penalty fine of £100 might be issued if the offence was committed on designated land.

At the conclusion of the report, Mr Morris thanked Cllr Devonshire for his good efforts on behalf of the Parish. A sentiment endorsed by all present at the meeting.

14. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Members had been circulated with a copy of the proposed Staffing Committee's terms of reference.

RESOLVED that the contents of the document be approved.

15. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Clerk reminded members that the External Auditor had given a qualified opinion on the 2014/2015 Financial Accounts in view of the Council's failure to undertake a revision of its Risk Assessments as part of its review of the effectiveness of its internal control. This constituted a breach of Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011. It was incumbent on the Council to decide what risks it faced and identify how it aimed at reducing the impact of these risks in the course of the Council's ability to provide its services.

Members had been circulated with a copy of both the Operational and Financial Risk Assessments, which had been compiled by the Clerk and which were more or less identical to the assessments produced by Cllr Hunt in the latter part of last year.

Having considered the contents of both documents it was RESOLVED that they be formally adopted by the Council.

16. ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PERRY GREEN

RESOLVED that this matter be deferred to another meeting.

17. TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (NO 2) 2015 P/TPS 593 – MUCH HADHAM HALL

Members had been circulated with details of a tree preservation order in respect of Much Hadham Hall, High Street, Much Hadham. The effect of such an order was that no person should:

- (a) Cut down, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy, or
- (b) Cause or permit the cutting down, topping, lopping, wilfully damaging or wilfully destroying any tree specified in the order.

Members raised no objection to the order.

18. PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

(a) Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2015

RESOLVED that the contents of the minutes be received and the discussions ratified.

19. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts as shown on the attached schedules (see Appendices A and B) be duly authorised for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

RESOLVED that the contents of the attached statement (see Appendix C) be noted.

20. DRAFT PRECEPT 2016/2017

Members had been circulated with a copy of the draft precept for 2016/2017.

RESOLVED that the precept for 2016/2017 be confirmed at £36,770.

21. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

22. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

- Environmental Development Plan – Perry Green.

23. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 2 February 2016, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15 pm to general applause of the residents present.