

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 2 February 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: 14 members of the public.
Plus Cllr I Devonshire (EHC).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs Taylor, Cllr McAndrew and Mrs M O'Neill.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that at the last meeting of the Parish Council he had set out three aims/priorities, which he would be pursuing, viz:

- To resolve the differences between the Parish Council, the Sports Association and the Village Hall Committee in order to secure an end to the conflicts of the past.
- To ensure that the Parish Council performed effectively and met its obligations.
- To secure the finances of the Parish Council.

The Chairman was happy to say that all three aims were being achieved and members were looking to the future. The Council would put forward a positive agenda, developing co-operative working relationships with other organisations, while protecting and improving community assets. To achieve this aspiration, there was a need for a full Council to be operational and for members of the public to come forward to fill the vacant positions.

The Parish Council needed to persuade people to come forward and to this end there needed to be an encouraging and supportive structure within the Council.

On of the main distractions which had led to a hostile situation over the proceeding months had been the storm of emails which had flowed within and around the Parish Council, which thankfully had subsided. Therefore, from now on:

- Individual emails that related to specific and immediate issues and were not copied to addresses beyond the PC would be answered promptly and courteously, as in the past.
- Emails addressed to the entire PC and beyond would be acknowledged promptly and then considered collectively before an appropriate response was delivered. Where the issues raised were of general concern to the parish, that response might be deferred until the following PC meeting.
- Emails that were disrespectful of individuals would be acknowledged but might not be answered fully or at all.
- If anyone had a concern that they felt was not otherwise being answered, then they could address it directly to the Chairman, without copying in the rest of the Council.

The Chairman would be sending confirmation of his guidelines to those who corresponded regularly with the Parish Council.

The intention was not to ignore parishioners' emails, but to ensure that Councillors were allowed the space to work on parish priorities. The Chairman's own priority had to be the running of the Parish Council and the rebuilding of trust and goodwill within the community. To allow him to achieve this priority, he gave notice that he would be stepping down from his role on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, although he would continue to give support to the project.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 5 January 2016 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

5. MATTERS ARISING

None.

6. PARISH COUNCIL VACANCIES

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Mrs Marianne O'Neill onto the Parish Council, although she was unable to attend due to personal circumstances. There now remained four vacancies on the Parish Council and a fresh election was scheduled to take place on 17 March 2016. Should the election be uncontested, then the whole process would roll forward until the Parish Council was up to its full complement of nine members. Notices of the forthcoming election would be produced shortly.

Cllr Hunt stated that there was nothing to stop people from outside the Parish (and within a three mile radius of Much Hadham) standing for election and the Council was vulnerable to being high-jacked by a political party. If local residents chose not to stand, others would. Doing nothing was not a vote for the status quo. It was incumbent on the parish to find the right candidates and every effort pursued to achieve this end.

7. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Sports Association

Cllr Mrs Liversage reported on the following matters:

A meeting had taken place with the Sports Association on 21 January 2016 at which the following issues had been raised:

- Flood defence equipment – Discussions on where to store the equipment. The Fire Service would provide help and advice.
- Dog waste – There was a need to provide new signage in view of the changes in the law. Everyone should respect the recreation ground.
- Queen's 90th birthday celebrations – Pavilion booked for a celebratory event.
- Website was being developed by the Sports Association and the Association was asking each of the Clubs to make a contribution.
- Insurance – reimbursement required from the Parish Council.
- A meeting would take place on 8 February 2016 to discuss the future of the pavilion and how to develop its management and financial viability.
- The Sports Association AGM would take place on 14 April 2016.
- Free tennis coaching would be provided.
- The Sports Association had received a grant from the Recreation Trust.
- Discussions had started on the return of cricket and plans were awaited from the Cricket Society as to how and when this could be achieved.

Members felt that it would be sensible to look at the land and to see how a cricket table could be accommodated. It was pointed out that cricket had stopped in Much Hadham in 2007 and had only been for a relatively short period.

The Chairman reiterated the proposal for a joint statement to be produced between the Sports Association and the Parish Council, which would explore the aspirations of the Parish Council in relation to the recreation ground and the pavilion. It was hoped that this would be progressed very shortly.

(ii) Pavilion

Cllr Mrs Liversage reported on the following matters:

- Coffee shop hours of opening were being re-adjusted for the next few months as trade had reduced.
- Snagging issues still needed to be addressed, especially the problem of overflowing of water in the showers, prior to the release of the retention money.
- Standardised keys to be issued to simplify the current arrangements.

A parishioner referred to the absence of an outside tap.

(iii) Highways

The Chairman referred to the following items:

- Serious flooding had occurred on 11 January 2016 with a number of vehicles being abandoned in Malting Lane and Bourne Lane with drivers requiring rescue. Thanks were extended to local residents in alerting members.
- The repair work required to the culvert at Hadham Hall had not been addressed.
- Flooding had been in evidence at Perry Green in the vicinity of the Hoops.
- The previous problem areas of flooding at Hadham Cross and the Jolly Waggoners had not been noticeable this time.
- Hedge cutting had taken place at Kettle Green Lane. However, a considerable amount of arisings had been left on the highway.
- A meeting with the HCC and Councillor Devonshire with regard to the parking issues in the village was yet to be convened.
- No new matters relating to street lighting had been raised during the month, although the two columns in Church Lane were still malfunctioning.
- A meeting had taken place on 17 January 2016 with Mr Newton regarding the complaint raised at the last meeting.

At this junction it was RESOLVED that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Mr Newton, who was in the audience, to clarify his position.

All the work that he had carried out in laying kerbing stones and erecting posts to deter traffic from mounting the verge was within his property boundary. The effect had been to widen, not narrow, the available highway. Mr Newton confirmed that he had no intention of using the entrance to his property, which had been there for 14 years, as it was now fenced, not gated and an orchard had been planted behind it.

The Chairman stated that any inaccuracies to which reference had been made at the previous meeting had been raised by parishioners and not by members of the Council.

Cllr Devonshire referred to his meeting with Mr Newton and Cllr Mrs Liversage, which had taken place on 17 January 2016 at which an assurance had been given that the posts would be re-positioned further away from the concrete kerbs so as to reduce the risk of damage to drivers' wing mirrors. Mr Newton gave an assurance that he would carry out the work as he had agreed.

(iv) Parish Paths Partnership

The Chairman referred to an email which had been received by Cllr Mrs Taylor from Nicholas Maddox, in which he had stated that the HCC was actively seeking the replacement of the footbridge on FP39. A request was made for any information as to the owner of the adjoining meadow next to the footpath bridge by Sidehill House.

No further matters were raised.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hunt gave an overview of the progress to date.

The first survey had been completed with questions being asked as to residents' likes and dislikes. Paper versions had been distributed by volunteers and electronic versions had been sent out via email. Hopefully, all residents were now in possession of the documentation. The deadline for receipt of the forms had been 31 January and information would need to be analysed and submitted to the Steering Group for its meeting on 9th February to evaluate the findings with a view to arranging a Consultation presentation on 19 March 2016.

As none of the Steering Committee had any experience of putting on displays of such a nature, any assistance by the general public would be appreciated.

A visit to St Elizabeth's had taken place the preceding week to explore areas of mutual interest and to hear of the improvement plans.

To date expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan had amounted to £769.

In conclusion, Cllr Young was thanked for his contribution to the work of the Steering Group.

(vi) Village Hall

No meetings had taken place since the last meeting of the Parish Council and the report from Mr John Clarke on the recent survey undertaken was awaited. Once this had been received, an early meeting would be convened with the Village Hall Managers to review the findings.

(vii) Other – Fibre Optic Broadband

Cllr Hunt stated that he had this day had a meeting with Gigaclear and he had been informed that the threshold of one third of residents required to sign up to FOB had not yet been achieved. St. Elizabeth's had expressed an interest to sign up and approach would be made to the Henry Moore Foundation. Hunsdon residents had signed up with the take up being unprecedented.

Cllr Hunt further stated that the Facebook site was now up and running.

8. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Cllr Devonshire referred to the following matters:

(i) Old Station Yard Development

The planning application was to be determined by the Development Management Committee on Wednesday, 3 February 2016. This was a very important application which was the first received for development outside the village boundary and on a green field site. Cllr Devonshire confirmed that he would be speaking against the proposed development at the Committee meeting.

(ii) Parking

A meeting was shortly to be arranged with representative of the County Council and East Herts Council to discuss the relevant issues in the parish.

(iii) Kettle Green Lane

A request would be made for the hedge arisings to be removed.

(iv) Hadham Hall Culvert

Repairs required would be pursued.

(v) Leaves

A mechanical sweeper had been in evidence in the parish and all the leaves had now been swept up, apart from Church Lane which was yet to be done. If there were any other spots, Cllr Devonshire asked parishioners to let him know.

9. STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA)

Cllr Hunt referred to the submission to East Herts, which members had approved.

10. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Flooding – Watery Lane

One of the problems would appear to be the apparent drop in the level of the lane from Danebridge Road to the ford, which in times of inclement weather when the lane was flooded, gave a false impression of the level of the water. A suggestion was made that a suitably worded sign could be erected to make people aware of the changing levels.

Cllr Hunt stated, as with the recent road closure notices, signs tended to be ignored.

Reference was made to a request made in September for the signage at the ford to be refurbished and before that for the depth posts to be repositioned. Members agreed to raise this matter again with the Hertfordshire County Council.

(ii) Parking

A question was raised asking what precisely was the issue relating to parking, as the presence of cars in the High Street was an effective means of traffic calming.

The Chairman stated that parking in the village was at full capacity, which was evident by the overuse of the village hall car park. A survey of the current situation was necessary to ascertain what steps could be taken to alleviate the situation and this information would be related to the Neighbourhood Plan. No assumptions had been made and any proposals would be presented to the Parish Council for discussion.

(iii) Perry Green Burial Ground

Concerns were expressed that the fencing at the burial ground had not been repaired, which did not give a good impression to families visiting the ground.

Cllr Mrs Liversage stated that she had been in touch with Berry Brett who would liaise with the owners of the adjacent land with a view to undertaking a repair.

(iv) Fibre Optic Broadband

A resident queried how to go about signing up to BT. Cllr Hunt stated that BT had not yet offered the service to Much Hadham and would not do so until sometime in 2017. However, Gigaclear would like to roll it out this year.

(v) Land off Station Road

A resident referred to a swathe of land between Windmil Way (top end) and Kettle Green Lane and he requested Cllr Devonshire to ascertain whether such land was of archeological interest.

11. PLANNING

(i) Minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee held on 5 January 2016

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

12. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts as shown on the attached schedule (see Appendix A) be duly authorised for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

Cllr Hunt drew members attention to the total fund balance of the Parish Council (ie £36,541.82), which included committed items in respect of the part repayment of the loan (£12,800) and Neighbourhood Plan money (£9,528). The remaining balance was fully earmarked.

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

13. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

14. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

- Invitation to St Elizabeth's for a representative to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to inform members of their improvement plan.
- Appointment of representatives to the Much Hadham Parochial Charities (The Almshouses).

15. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place on 1 March 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40 pm.