

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 1 March 2016, in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

Cllr W Compton
*Cllr I Hunt
*Cllr Mrs J Liversage

*Cllr B Morris
*Cllr Mrs M O'Neill
Cllr Mrs P Taylor
*Cllr A J Young

* denotes present.

In attendance: 25 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Devonshire (EHC), Cllr McAndrew (HCC), Cllr Mrs Taylor and Cllr Compton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed both Cllr Morris and Cllr Compton (not in attendance) to the Council following their uncontested election. There still remained two vacancies on the Council and an election to fill the vacancies would be held at a later date. It was to be hoped that residents would come forward in order to bring the Parish Council up to full strength.

The Chairman reiterated his three aims/priorities, which he would be pursuing, viz:

- (i) Ending conflict.
- (ii) Ensuring that the Parish Council performed effectively and met its obligations.
- (iii) Securing the finances of the Parish Council.

These priorities would be held at least until the Annual Parish Council meeting in May. However, since they had largely been secured, the Council could now move onto more positive and creative tasks, ie developing the Neighbourhood Plan and furthering a procedural policy between the Parish Council and the Sports Association to move forward in a positive way for the future. A new working group would be created to deal with residents' concerns on highway issues and it was the intention to develop a promotional video of the Parish to be as inclusive as possible in advertising its heritage and future potential. It was the intention to make Much Hadham a model of how a Parish Council could work to a positive agenda for the benefit of the entire community.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2 February 2016 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman apologised that the draft minutes and agenda had not been uploaded on the Parish Council website.

5. MATTERS ARISING

None.

6. MEMBER'S REPORTS

(i) Sports Association

Cllr Mrs Liversage informed members that a meeting had taken place on 8 February 2016 with the Sports Association and members of the Council, which had been both cordial and productive.

(ii) Pavilion

A number of snagging issues were still to be addressed and, as a consequence the retention money due under the contract for the refurbishment of the pavilion had not been released. The most important issue to address had been the water problem to the showers and in this regard John Clarke had arranged for the installation of a larger threshold to the showers. Other matters included the malfunction of the internal doors and an issue concerning the ceiling paint. Insufficient storage had been identified and ways of addressing this matter would be researched.

The Tennis Club had agreed to fund the cost of a digital lock for the external toilet.

(iii) Highways

The Chairman reported on the following:

(a) Perry Green and Green Tye

A productive meeting had taken place with Cllr McAndrew (HCC) and Paul Patmore (Highways Locality Officer) with a view to prioritising highways issues both in terms of controlling vehicle movements and speeds and to establish a strategy for undertaking highway maintenance work in both hamlets..

(b) Street lights

It had been reported that 11 columns were out of lighting over the weekend.

(c) Church Lane

- The solution to the lack of lighting was still being pursued.

- Resurfacing work was not listed for 2016/2017.
- Fault reports had been submitted in respect of various potholes.

(d) Potholes

Fault reports had been submitted for potholes in Ash Meadow and near Snells Corner, which were extensive along the verge and included a sunken gully.

(e) The Ford

Hertfordshire Highways had confirmed that improved signage would be installed by the end of March.

(f) Parking and Traffic Management

The Parish Council was working with the Hertfordshire County Council to explore the possibility of providing Speed Indicative Devices which could be moved to various locations in the parish.

It is also proposed to set up a Sub-Committee/Working Group to form a coherent policy on traffic management problems.

(iv) Parish Paths Partnership

Cllr Hunt reported the following on behalf of Cllr Mrs Taylor:

FP22 Had been surfaced by the County Council's contractor from the Almshouses to the school playground.

FP11 Requested surface to be restored at Dells Cottage.

FP13 Illegal posts and fencing had been installed across the path beyond Dell Cottage. Foxleys had been given 14 days to make good.

FP39 Vegetation had been cleared. New footbridge was to be installed next Monday.

BR52 Vegetation had been cleared. However, the surface had been left slippery. Nicholas Maddex had agreed to inspect the site and take appropriate action.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hunt reported as follows:

The recent replies to the residents' surveys (169) had been collated and the contents were in the process of being analysed. Based on the results a vision statement would be prepared for Much Hadham, which would seek to incorporate the main issues identified in the survey.

A number of highway issues had been raised in the survey which, although not related to the Neighbourhood Plan, would, nevertheless, be taken on board by the Parish Council over the course of the next three years.

At the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan was the management of suitable housing development, which was primarily about the future use of land and how to achieve the minimum house building target of 54 houses in the next 15 years (27 within the next 5 years).

The Neighbourhood Plan would contain statutory rules for developers to follow giving direction on what and where to build.

East Herts had been updating the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and no new sites had been added beyond those published with each of the sites being designated as unsuitable for development.

The total spend to date on the Neighbourhood Plan amounted to £823.

(vi) Village Hall

Cllr Mrs Liversage tabled for members' information a copy of the financial accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2015. It was noted that income for the year of £13,942 was down from the previous year of £16,445. However, it was encouraging that a mini tennis club had taken a booking for the current year and with the successful fund raising from the Christmas market, which had raised £700, this would help to redress the income shortfall of the previous financial year.

Maintenance work had been identified. However, the main concern was the condition of the green room floor, which would need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Hall charges had been discussed and a decision had been taken that the present charges should remain unchanged.

(vii) Other

The Chairman referred to the conditions of the parish notice boards with a number being in need of repair. Money had been set aside for this purpose and quotations for the work were being sought. The Chairman further stated that the notice boards were open to parishioners to advertise matters of interest in the parish. Whilst not wishing to set unnecessarily rigid rules, the notice boards were there to serve the Parish Council and anything relating to parish matters. They should not be used for unofficial election notices or party political material or for any reference to personal opinions or comments.

Cllr Hunt stated that Gigaclear had sent out letters of intent with regard to the provision of fibre optic broadband, which he felt was encouraging.

7. JOINT STATEMENT OF INTENT BETWEEN THE SPORTS ASSOCIATION AND THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Chairman stated that in the spirit of mutual benefit of the community the Parish Council was working highly effectively with the Sports Association with a view to addressing current problems and establishing a way forward for the future. It was to this end that the Chairman had compiled a statement of intent, a draft of which was tabled for members' information.

Following discussion and a suggested amendment being agreed, it was RESOLVED that the attached statement, as amended, be approved. (see Appendix A).

It was now hoped that with this statement in place as a working document that both the Parish Council and the Sports Association could work cohesively together in the future.

The Chairman referred to a question that had been received from a resident (outside of the meeting) requesting clarification of the legal status of the buildings on the recreation ground in relation to the 1947 conveyance. The request had been for the Parish Council to seek legal advice. The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, this would involve the Parish Council in unnecessary legal fees and he felt that there were sufficient people within the parish with legal experience to address the issues, which had been raised.

8. MUCH HADHAM PAROCHIAL CHARITIES (ALMSHOUSES)

Cllr Morris expressed his concern that, as far as he could recall, at no time between 2003 and 2015 had the Parish Council been approached by the Parochial Charities with a view to trustee representation. He requested that this matter be clarified.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council confirm the reappointment of the three Parish Council representatives and the Clerk seek the required clarification.

9. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

In view of the absence of both Cllr Devonshire and Cllr McAndrew no reports were forthcoming.

10. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

Prior to discussion on this matter, the Chairman referred to the Council's Standing Orders which stated that the allotted time for resident's comments was 20 minutes with 3 minutes per resident being allowed within the 20 minute slot.

(i) Station Road – Strip of land

A resident referred to the matter raised at the previous meeting concerning the archaeological importance of the site and he had established that there had been two spot finds on the land. However, he was unsure as to what they had been.

(ii) Station Road Development

A reference was made to the recent planning application in respect of the three houses on Station Road adjacent to Millar's View. Slow worms had been found to be on-site and concerns were raised that the East Herts Council had not undertaken any survey prior to the granting of planning permission. A question was raised as to whether this was deliberate or an oversight.

(iii) Cricket

A resident raised the matter concerning the provision of cricket on the recreation ground and following correspondence with the Chairman of the Sports Association, he was concerned that this sporting provision was not being pursued. The resident felt that the Parish Council would be in dereliction of its duties if it did not ensure that cricket was provided.

The Chairman stated that it had always been the Parish Council's intention to see the return of cricket to the recreation ground and it would support any moves which would result in this being achieved. A plea was made that if nothing else, notwithstanding this statement, every effort should be made to bring about the return of the cricket nets and to promote the formation of a local team. The Chairman agreed to discuss this matter with the Chairman of the Sports Association.

(iv) Almshouse Trust

A resident drew members' attention to the historical relationship between the Trust and the Parish Council whereby it had always been the practice for the accounts and activities of the Trust to be presented to the Parish Council following the closure of the Annual Parish Meeting. Also lost seemed to be the presentations at the meetings of reports from village organisations, which had always been looked upon as being a vehicle for informing the parish of the various activities and organisations operating within the parish.

The Chairman stated that he and his fellow members were well aware of the situation and they were very mindful to reintroduce the previous practice. This was the reason he, with the agreement of his fellow councillors, had decided that the Annual Parish Meeting this year would be held on Friday, 27 May, separate from the Annual Parish Council meeting, which would be held on Tuesday, 3 May.

At this juncture, a number of residents vacated the meeting leaving only seven in attendance.

11. PLANNING

(i) Minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee held on 2 February 2016

RESOLVED that the contents of the minutes be received and the decisions 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 B) be duly authorised for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

Cllr Hunt requested that the financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2016 include all known liabilities.

Cllr Hunt also suggested that both he and the Clerk meet to discuss the future presentation of the financial statements.

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

13. URGENT BUSINESS

- Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA).

Cllr Morris referred to the SLAA consultation response and he expressed his concern with regard to the reported statements made by the Parish Council in support of the Draft Assessment.

Cllr Hunt responded that the District Council had incorrectly stated that the comments of support were made by the Parish Council when in fact they had been submitted by the site provider.

Cllr Morris further expressed concern regarding the report in the parish magazine that the Parish Council was gearing up to accepting a minimum house-build target of 54 houses over the next 15 years and he questioned from where the information emanated.

Cllr Morris was informed that the figure of 54 houses was based on 10% of the existing housing stock, as planned in the East Herts Council's draft consultation.

14. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

None.

15. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 5 April 2016, in the Green Tye Mission Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10 pm.