

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Annual Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 3 May 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

* denotes present.

In attendance: 35 members of the public.
Plus Cllr I Devonshire (EHC).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Cllr Mrs Penny Taylor be duly elected to the office of Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year.

Note on a request for a signed ballot the following results were recorded:

In favour of the resolution: Cllr Hunt, Cllr Mrs O'Neill and Cllr Mrs Taylor
Against the resolution: Cllr Compton and Cllr Morris

2. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Cllr Mrs Taylor duly signed her declaration of office.

3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Cllr Ian Hunt be duly elected Vice Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year.

Note on a request for a signed ballot the following results were recorded:

In favour of the resolution: Cllr Hunt, Cllr Mrs O'Neill and Cllr Mrs Taylor
Against the resolution: Cllr Compton and Cllr Morris

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs Liversage and Cllr G McAndrew (HCC).

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

6. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and she hoped that as many people as possible would exercise their democratic right in voting at the forthcoming election to be held on 5 May 2016.

With regard to the appointment of Parish representatives, this matter would be addressed at the next meeting when the Parish Council would be up to full strength.

Following a flow of emails concerning the Much Hadham facebook page, a categorical assurance was given that the derogatory remark posted had nothing to do with the Parish Council or anyone associated with the Parish Council.

8. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2016

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

9. MATTERS ARISING

None.

10. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Sports Association

ClIrr Mrs Liversage had emailed members the following information:

"A meeting of the Sports Association had taken place with representatives from all the clubs in attendance and the following matters were discussed:

Insurance

Due to the increase in insurance premium for this year, thought needs to be given to the re-build value of the pavilion for insurance purposes. (Perhaps the PC could get a friendly surveyor to do an estimated re-build value, and Alex Farmer will explore the possibilities of reduction in the premium.

Website

A new website is under construction, ready in the next few weeks. This consists of 5 pages: one page for each club. All information about the SA will be at muchhadham.uk.

SA fees

These will remain the same as last year.

Election of Officers and Committee members

Chair – Fred Pavey

Secretary – Brian Ellis

Treasurer – Fred Pavey

Tennis – Alex Farmer

Saturday Football – Charlie Sullivan

Sunday Football – Dave Devoil

Bowls – Brian Ellis

Other co-opted members are Barry Brett and Ian Aldridge. Plus two parish councillors yet to be identified when there is a full council.”

CLLr Morris requested that a revaluation of the premises be undertaken for insurance purposes.

(ii) Pavilion

CLLr Hunt (in the absence of CLLr Mrs Liversage) stated that the Council was pleased that the pavilion refurbishment had been completed on time due to the efforts of former Councillors and was being well used by the local clubs.

The coffee shop was now open for business for limited periods during the week, the first children’s party had recently taken place which had been a huge success and the building would be utilised as part of the Queen’s birthday celebration.

With regard to the building project, the final contract certificate had been received and the Architect had authorised the release of the retention money.

(iii) Highways

CLLr Hunt reported on the following

- Still pressing the Authority for remedial work to be undertaken on the damaged roads through Green Tye and Perry Green.
- Ongoing problems with regard to the flooding of Watery Lane.
- The reporting system for required remedial work to larger potholes worked well. However, members of the public should continue to report all potholes irrespective of the severity of depth.
- Forthcoming road closures:
 - Spur from Kettle Green Lane down to brick Barn – highway maintenance.
 - Blackbridge Lane – lane dressing.
 - Road outside St Elizabeth’s – replacement of telegraph pole. Note there was some discussion as to whether the proposed diversion route proposed was satisfactory. On a

recorded vote members supported the proposal. – In favour: Cllrs Taylor, Morris and Compton. Against: Cllrs Hunt and O’Neill.

- Street lighting – The Parish Council would need to address the fact that some of its assets (street lighting columns) were old and a replacement programme would need to be considered as part of a rolling programme. This month ten street lamps had been out of lighting and one roadside lamp had not been working. This compared with eight street lamps and two roadside lamps as reported at the last meeting.

(iv) Parish Paths Partnership

Cllr Morris read out the contents of the attached report (see Appendix A).

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hunt was pleased with the progress that had been achieved to date in working towards the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish and he referred to the various stages which had been addressed in arriving at the present position.

Regular meetings of the Steering Group had taken place with the latest one held on 12 April 2016 discussing the implications of the East Herts Planning Policy document relating to the treatment of villages in the emerging District Plan.

However, more was to be done over the next few months. A public consultation event was proposed for 18 June 2016 and the Group would be pressing ahead as a matter of urgency in development a website.

(vi) Village Hall

Members were informed that discussions had taken place with the Village Hall Managers concerning the work required to be carried out at the village hall. At the moment immediate work was required with regard to manhole cover works and further work would be required to address the drainage issues. The work involved would be officially authorised and paid for by the Parish Council with the cost (ex-VAT) being met by the Village Hall Management Committee. No cost would fall on the Parish Council. Members were reminded that the building was a Parish Council asset.

11. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Cllr Devonshire stated that there were no issues he wished to report other than as being a member of the District Council’s Community Scrutiny Committee he was always being made aware of the need for younger people to have the opportunity to continue to live in the village. Affordable housing was a very important issue and one that he would continue to support in any development proposals.

Cllr Morris expressed his concern regarding the absence of Cllr McAndrew at the meeting and the lack of reporting to the Parish Council on highway issues, which he felt was not acceptable.

The Chairman stated that she would make contact with Cllr McAndrew and that he would be requested to provide a written report to future meetings of the Parish Council.

12. EAST HERTS DISCUSSION PAPER ON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Groups had been asked by the District Council's Planning Policy Team for their comments on a discussion paper regarding a proposed development strategy for the villages as set out in the Draft District Plan.

Cllr Hunt had produced a draft response for members' consideration (see Appendix B) and he gave a verbal overview of the situation following which it was RESOLVED that Standing Orders be suspended to allow public participation in any discussion.

The following points were raised:

- It was felt admirable that the draft response had been put together, but there was a feeling that professional help should have been obtained in view of the conflicting statements.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the importance of an upper limit, as a 15% limit could not be imposed.
- With regard to affordable housing, concerns were expressed that no control could be exercised over from where people originated. Parishioners could not see why smaller developments of affordable housing could not be provided. Concerns were expressed that there had not been any affordable housing provided in the villages.
- The bulk of the sites identified by East Herts Council would appear to be archeological.
- It was questioned why the boundaries could not be challenged, as there needed to be a spread of development on all sides of the village.
- The biggest mistake would be to lose the village boundaries.
- Need to question why no mention had been made of development for Perry Green and Green Tye and other sites throughout the parish should be investigated.
- The document did not take account of National Planning Policy guidelines.
- There would appear to be no support for the policies proffered by the emerging East Herts District Plan.
- With regard to the consultation document, why can't we "just say no".
- It was felt that sustainability must be a key issue.
- Disappointment was expressed that the Chairman did not call a special meeting of the Council to discuss an official Parish Council response.

Following the closure of the above comments, Standing Orders were reinstated.

Having assessed the contents of the consultation document and the contents of the draft response, members RESOLVED that they were happy with the current East Herts Council's policy with regard to villages and the level of protection afforded to the defined boundaries. The content of the draft response was not supported.

13. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

- It was reported that foxes had been seen in the village hall car park. A request was made for details to be included on the website.

- Concerns were expressed regarding the insurance of the buildings on the recreation ground and the level of cover for public liability and the apparent dual cover being effected by both the Parish Council and the Sports Association. The Chairman confirmed that this matter would be investigated.
- Reference was made to a recent entry on the Parish Council's facebook page in which a derogatory remark had been made regarding former Councillors. A request was made for information on the administrator of the site and whether any Police/Electoral action was being contemplated. The Chairman replied that the Police had not been involved and that the matter was under in-house investigation. She stated that she would not be releasing the name of the administrator. However, at this stage a number of members were unhappy and felt the response to be unreasonable. What had happened was felt to be a criminal offence.
- A sadness was expressed by a resident concerning the events which had taken place over the last year involving members of the Parish Council and a hope was expressed that the new Council would work together as a team and with a "smile".

14. TERMS OF REFERENE FOR PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Hunt had previously circulated to all members a draft proposal for the terms of reference for the Planning Committee. The aim of the proposal was to set out the responsibilities of the Committee and its expectations.

Members considered the document and having made a few amendments RESOLVED to approve the attached document (see Appendix C).

15. MUCH HADHAM PAROCHIAL CHARITIES

Members were informed that Mr James Steel was first appointed as a trustee and treasurer in 2013 and that his current term of office was due to expire on 30 September 2016. The Parish Council was now being asked to consider re-appointing Mr Steel who had indicated that he was willing to serve for a further term.

In view of the reported discussions concerning the uncertainty over the appointment of previous trustees by the Parish Council, Mr Steel had decided to step down now a few months early in order to resolve any uncertainty and to allow the Parish Council to make a fresh appointment.

RESOLVED that Mr Steel's re-appointment be confirmed.

16. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee held on 5 April 2016 be received and the decisions contained therein be ratified.

17. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts as set out in the attached statement (see Appendix D) be duly approved for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

RESOLVED that the contents of the attached statement (see Appendix E) be received.

Note: The Clerk confirmed that the recorded income included the first instalment of the precept (ie £18,385).

18. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

19. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

- (i) Review of Standing Orders.
- (ii) Confirmation of Parish Representatives and Ambassadors.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

27 May 2016 – Annual Parish Meeting

7 June 2016 – Ordinary meeting of the Much Hadham Parish Council

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.35 pm.