

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 6 September 2016, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

*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 the Chairman's absence, meeting chaired by Cllr I Hunt.

In attendance: 22 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs P Taylor, Cllr C Thompson, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) and Cllr G McAndrew (HCC)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in 2 cheques to be approved under agenda item 13(i) and therefore would not be voting on the motion to approve the payments. No other declarations made.

3. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no notifications of urgent business.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) New Clerk

The new Clerk, Fiona Forth, was welcomed. The contribution that John Ingham had made over many years was remembered and it was noted that several residents represented the parish at his funeral.

(ii) Defamation action

The Chairman announced that the Parish Council's insurers are dealing with a defamation action and a claim for unspecified damages brought by two related residents against a Parish Councillor. As the matter is being dealt with under the legal process for these types of claim, no further discussion or comment can be made before it has been resolved.

(iii) Fete

On a much happier note, the Chairman announced that the bank holiday Fete was possibly the largest ever – a complete success and just a perfect day. On behalf of the Parish Council, Tony Bond and his Fete Committee, together with the very large number of volunteers, were thanked for their considerable efforts. It was reported at yesterday's meeting of the Recreation Trust that £16,700 had been raised. The Trust will be inviting grant applications in October to be considered at its meeting in early November.

(iv) Contributions to discussions

Fellow councillors were reminded that it is good practice to make all contributions to discussions through the Chair, rather than making speeches to the audience. The views of residents welcomed under item 10.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 2 AUGUST 2016

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

6. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS

None.

Cllr W Compton asked for it to be noted that he was disappointed that flood defence equipment was being disposed of.

7. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Cllr Mrs M O'Neill re-iterated the comments made previously regarding the Fete, and reported that positive feedback had been received from parishioners.

Cllr Mrs M O'Neill also referred to the invitation to local residents, sent by Cllr Mrs P Taylor, to comment on a proposal by the PG>S to move the telephone box on Station Road to the green at Green Tye, and to install a defibrillator in it. The Parish Council has owned the box since 2011, and is responsible for maintaining and making best use of it. Responses from residents so far, which are treated as confidential, are both for and against a move but

no decision will be taken at this meeting as it is not an agenda item. The intention is to gather in all the views of those living close to the telephone box and make a properly informed decision. If any resident has an opinion on this, they are welcome to pass it on to a Councillor or the Clerk.

Finally, there will be coffee morning in the Pavilion in support of Macmillan on Friday 30th September from 9 to 11:30am. Everyone is invited.

Cllr W O'Neill provided an update on the Village Hall Green Room floor. Repair work is expected to start in the second half of September, after the Horticultural Show. Contingency plans are place to offer the Pavilion or Bowls Pavilion as alternative venues.

Cllr K Twort confirmed there was nothing to report in respect of the Sports Association.

(ii) Environment (inc Public Rights of Way)

Trees on Green Tye Village Green

Cllr W Compton reported that he was waiting for a report from an arborist to assess the poplar trees and determine the remedy required. It was also confirmed that the Parish Council's insurers would not be covering the costs.

Cllr B Morris raised that if these trees are considered dangerous that they should be cordoned off as a precaution. Following discussion, it was agreed that until receive the assessment from the arborist, the Parish Council does not have the knowledge to make that judgement. In the interim, Cllr W Compton to seek views of local residents from the GT/PGS.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr B Morris provided an update on the state of PRow in the parish.

Following a question, Cllr B Morris outline the process for dealing with PRow matters, highlighting that HCC is very good in this area and deals with problems raised.

Litter bins

Cllr I Hunt reported that, as approved at the last meeting, the 4 litter bins have been repaired.

(iii) Highways Cllr W O'Neill

Traffic has flowed smoothly throughout the parish, except for Bank Holiday Monday when the tremendously successful Fete caused gridlock as a result of cars queuing, up to an hour, to access the Fete carpark. Plans are being made to try to improve this situation for future years.

Representatives of the Parish Council met with Ringway on 26th August. Ringway were thanked for their part in the work carried out in the parish to greatly improve the condition of many of the roads. The different techniques employed to repair the roads were explained.

All the current issues with highways in the parish were raised at the meeting and the response from Ringway was realistically positive. The system for fault reporting (including pot holes) was flagged by Ringway as the best way to communicate. The reporting system is on the HCC website and using this will ensure a speedier response than communicating via the Parish Council.

The issues concerning Snell Corner and Joyce's Cottage in Green Tye have not been forgotten but are taking longer than is ideal to be resolved.

The footbridge at the ford is being repaired and the question of the wall beside the ford has been raised with the owner of the wall who assured us that the matter is in hand.

Cllr B Morris raised an issue in relation to Malting Lane, outside the Police House. The house owner has moved the property boundary by, effectively, placing metal railing on the road. When the house owner's car is parked on the road it makes it difficult for traffic to pass at that point. It was queried whether this was legal and it was agreed that Cllr W O'Neill would investigate.

Cllr I Hunt reported that notification had been received that sometime in the next 18 months there will be road repair work on Church Lane and of the road through Green Tye and Perry Green. However, the extent of works is currently unknown.

(iv) Media

Nothing to report.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that the majority of neighbourhood plans across the country are in the same position as Much Hadham.

EHC are close to completing their work on the District Plan. The final policies that impact on Much Hadham will be released in the next 2 weeks, which will then give a higher level of certainty as to the planning environment within which the NP will have force. Copies of the proposed District Plan will be available late October, ahead of the 6-week public consultation period starting in November. This will be followed by the Inspection in March.

Locally, work continues on identifying sites that might be suitable for development and on assessing the housing needs of the parish. Cllr C Thompson has joined the Steering Group and brings decades of planning experience and knowledge with him. A small exhibition at the Fete, as part of efforts to communicate the results of the consultation exercise, was well-received. The stage has been reached where most people understand the need for

more housing in Much Hadham and the discussion is moving on to what type of housing is needed and where should it be located.

Total spend to date on the Neighbourhood Plan is £1,465.

Cllr B Morris outlined the position in relation to the Harlow North development. Highlighting that it would be prudent for Much Hadham to consider the positive and negative impacts of this development on the parish, particularly given that the Parish Council has provided some financial support to the Stop Harlow North campaign.

(vi) Security

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that, based on the latest Police crime statistics, Much Hadham was a safe place to live.

(vii) Other

Nothing to report.

8. PARISH COUNCIL 3 YEAR PLAN

Cllr I Hunt reported that the 3 year plan, prepared by Cllr Mrs P Taylor, had been circulated to all Cllrs. It covers, traffic, parking, street lighting, community events, the burial ground and an asset register.

The intention is to use this to deliver a difference to the parish. Parishioners are invited to work with the Parish Council if there are any aspects of the plan they wish to get involved in.

It is clear from the plan that a significant amount of work falls within highways. Consideration needs to be given to sharing this workload.

Cllr B Morris stated that street lighting was not an issue previously and considered that broken street lights should be dealt with.

Cllr W Compton queried why, given that part of the village is a zone 3 flood zone, that flood defence is not a matter on the 3 year plan. It was explained that the areas identified on the plan were based on those raised by parishioners as issues to be addressed.

9. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

(i) Report from District Councillor (Cllr Ian Devonshire)

Cllr I Devonshire was not present at the meeting. However, a request had been made to report progress on the District Plan and this has been done under agenda item 7(v).

(ii) Report from County Councillor

Cllr G McAndrew not present at the meeting. However, Cllr I Hunt provided update in that request has been made to provide a list of minor works required to Ringway.

10. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

Flooding in Maltings Lane was raised with suggestion that it would be sensible to look at the drainage under the road as part of the proposed resurfacing work. Cllr B Morris explained the impact that blocked drains has on the water flow, highlighting that HCC do not clear out drains frequently enough. A resident concurred, stating that HCC have stated that clearing drains is once every 3 years. Matter to be raised with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC).

In response to an observation that the consultation in respect of the telephone box in Windmill Way was undemocratic, Cllr I Hunt replied that the Parish Council would make a nuanced decision based on all the information rather than simply a count of opinions for and against, with views of local residents still being received. An additional question was raised in terms of the cost of moving the box and it was reported that this is would be covered by the PG/GTS if a decision to move it was taken.

The state of the fence at the Perry Green burial site was raised, with reference to the broken concrete posts and overgrown vegetation. Cllr B Morris highlighted the history behind the installation of the posts. He also reported misuse of the car park after dark. He suggested that consideration should be given to installing a PIR light. This will be considered at a Burial Authority meeting, possibly later this evening.

A resident suggested that if there is a real concern that the trees at Green Tye green are dangerous, shouldn't a request be made for an urgent assessment by an arborist? Cllr W Compton responded that a request has been made.

For the boundary at the old Police House, a resident highlighted that an online search of the land registry would identify where it lies.

In respect of the decision to sell the flood defence equipment, it was reported that the Sports Association had not received any interest in its usage from any resident whilst it had been stored there, nor was there any sand to fill bags with.

It was raised that there are more bollards/stones etc on verges than previously.

Cllr W Compton reported an issue on behalf of a resident. The car parked between Windmill Way and Broadfield Way causes difficulties for other road users, particularly cyclists wanting to use the cycle pass. The Clerk to write a letter.

Cllr W Compton read a letter received from a resident in respect of the Pavilion toilet where assurance was being sought that this facility would be available after school. Cllr K Twort responded that there was an issue with the effectiveness of the digilock that had been installed and this is being worked on. There is insufficient income from the Pavilion to pay a daily cleaner.

11. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2 August be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

12. STAFFING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 11 August be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

In response to a question for Cllr W Compton, the Clerk confirmed that it was not necessary to record in the minutes apologies from Councillors who were neither Members of the Committee nor invited to attend its meetings.

13. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

Cllr B Morris raised concern that the listing of expenditure items had been amended after the agenda had been issued. It was agreed to defer the payment of cheque 677 until the October meeting.

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment.

Chq	Payable to	For	Amount
680	Green Tye Mission Hall	Hall hire 2nd August 2016	27.00
681	Home & Office Fire Extinguishers Ltd	Annual Service	242.70
682	MH Sports Association	Reimbursement fire extinguisher annual service	44.00
683	MH Sports Association	Grass cutting Recreation Ground	800.00
684	MH Sports Association	Share of water Recreation Ground	136.70
685	Cllr I Hunt	Reimburse pavilion expenditure	55.81
686	J Ingham	Clerk's salary July 2016	488.08
687	HMRC	Income tax July 2016	122.00

continued

Chq	Payable to	For	Amount
688	J Ingham	Clerks expenses for Apr - Jul 2016	196.16
689	FM Forth	Clerks expenses Invoice 1	30.59
690	FM Forth	Locum Clerk invoice	55.00
691	BA Affinity Water	Water bill	24.57

Cheques will be signed and despatched at the conclusion of the meeting.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement has been expanded to include a comparison of budgeted financial position to the actual position and a listing of expenditure funded from the Neighbourhood Plan reserve. Key points highlighted were:

- Not all income and expenditure items were included in the budget on the premise that would be matched, for example, in respect of running the Pavilion;
- New Homes Bonus received (£6,420) effectively double the budget but important to note that level will reduce in the next financial year to just over £3,000;
- Pavilion is over budget and this is due to no budget being set for the running costs (cleaning, electricity etc) and this will be addressed when setting the budget for the next financial year.

Cllr B Morris queried whether there was a meter at the Pavilion for electricity and it was confirmed that there was. It was also asked whether there was a separate water meter and it was highlighted that it was shared. Consideration would be given to whether it would be worthwhile having a separate water meter for the Pavilion.

(iii) Use of s106 monies/early partial repayment of the PWLB loan

Cllr I Hunt outlined the background to using the s106 monies to make an early partial repayment of the PWLB loan. (Full report attached at Appendix A)

The issue is that if the Parish Council make an early repayment now, a premium would be paid of £2,425. This means that instead of the loan balance reducing by £12,810, the value of s106 monies, it would only reduce by £10,319.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to confirm that s106 monies will no longer be earmarked for, or applied to, partial early repayment of the PWLB loan.

It was also identified that a forward financial plan should be developed to make it clear what funds are available, in addition to the s106 monies, for investing within the parish.

14. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

15. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no matters of urgent business.

16. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Chairman confirmed that the items for future agendas were:

- (i) Review of Standing Orders.
- (ii) Press and Media Policy Draft
- (iii) Complaints Procedure Draft
- (iv) External Auditor's Report
- (v) Internal Auditor's Recommendations

Cllr B Morris agreed to provide the Clerk with details of item he would like put on the agenda for the next meeting.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 4th October 2016, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:12 pm.

Agenda item 13 (iii)**Use of s106 monies / early partial repayment of the PWLB loan**

Following the building of new houses at Moor Place, the PC received £12,810 as a s106 payment from EHC earlier this year. Although it seems there hasn't been a formal resolution, at the September 2015 PC meeting "Members confirmed that it was their intention that all of the Section 106 money, when received, would be utilised in reducing the current £80,000 PWLB loan."

The funds were earmarked for an early partial repayment of the pavilion loan on its first anniversary, May 2016, the soonest date allowed under the terms of the loan agreement. However, for unknown reasons, the payment was not made by our Clerk at that time. From the papers we have, it appears John had contacted the PWLB office and had all the necessary details, but had not instructed the bank to transfer the funds.

The loan is at a fixed interest rate (3.08%) over 20 years to 2035, with half yearly repayments for capital and interest of £2,693 funded from the precept (i.e. our share of the council tax). The loan now stands at ~£77,000. As long-term interest rates are lower than those at the time the loan was drawn down, when an early partial repayment is requested there is a premium to be paid to compensate the lender who would otherwise be out of pocket. (The lender has to continue paying the higher rate on the funds it in turn borrowed to lend to us, but will no longer be receiving that rate from us on that portion of the borrowing repaid early. This is entirely normal.)

As at 4th August, if we repaid £12,810 now the loan would reduce by only £10,319; £66 would meet accrued interest and the remaining £2,425 would be the expense of the premium. [Since 4th August, the premium has probably become more expensive following the reduction in base rate and further reduction in long term gilt rates. The further that long term interest rates fall, the higher the premium. Correspondingly, if interest rates rise, the premium is reduced.]

If we make the early repayment now, then the half yearly loan repayments would fall to ~£2,330, a reduction of ~£730pa over the next 19 years. Consequently, we could reduce the precept each year by no longer budgeting for this amount. However, it would save only ~90p pa for each house on average - indeed even less for smaller houses paying less council tax.

Given these modest savings, we must ask ourselves whether making the early partial repayment and incurring the premium expense would be best use of £12,810, or whether we would better serve our parish by applying the funds to another project e.g. replacing the defunct lampposts on Church Lane and Tower Hill? Or funding some other aspects of our 3-year plans.

So, the proposal before the parish council is to confirm that its funds will no longer be earmarked for, or applied to, partial early repayment of the PWLB loan.

Cllr Ian Hunt

24 August 2016