

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 5th September 2017, at 7:30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall, Green Room.

Cllr W Compton	*Cllr C Thompson
*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chairman)	*Cllr K Twort
*Cllr B Morris	*Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chairman)
*Cllr Mrs M O'Neill	*Cllr Mrs J Liversage
*Cllr W O'Neill	

* denotes present.

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and 10 members of the public.

17/137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr W Compton.

17/138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in a cheque to be approved under agenda item 17/147(i) and therefore would not be voting on the motion to approve the payments. No other declarations made.

17/139. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

17/140. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that the Fete had been a huge success with a profit of over £18,000. This was undoubtedly due to the massive amount of time put into its organisation by the Chairman of the Fete Committee, Tony Bond. He has an enthusiastic and tireless team, especially Lindsey Steele who organises the volunteers and admin. A round of applause showed our appreciation.

In addition, the Chairman reminded residents' present that whilst they were not able to speak on a matter until the specific residents' comments agenda item, if they put their hand up, it would be noted for the correct time.

17/141. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Cllr B Morris requested the following amendments to the minutes:

- Page 1 17/125: delete “Cllr B Morris requested he be excluded from these congratulations”;
- Page 5 17/130 (iii) 2nd bullet: add “and a gate behind the fence”; and
- Page 5 17/130(iii) last bullet: delete at the start “Based on knowledge from discussions with Ringway” and add at the end “so a resident asked if planning permission was required.”

Subject to the amendments above, RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 1st August 2017 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

17/142. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Report on outstanding matters noted.

Cllr B Morris reported that, in conjunction with others, he was preparing a document to submit in response to the Gilston Area Concept Framework Consultation. A precis of this document to be included on the agenda for the next meeting. He also stated that the initial deadline for submission of comments, 1st September, had been extended due to issues with East Herts Council’s Planning portal. The revised date is believed to be the 13th September.

17/143. MEMBERS’ REPORTS

(i) Community

Pavilion

Cllr K Twort reported that the work at the Pavilion is virtually complete, with no extra costs resulting from the work undertaken.

It is recognised, from the last Sports Association meeting, that significant effort is made to increase membership. Fred Pavey and his team were thanked for their efforts.

In terms of the footpath from the Recreation Ground car park to the road, there is only minor work required and Cllr K Twort will ensure that this is done.

Village Hall

Cllr W O’Neill reported that the Village Hall Management Committee are trying out a new lighting system down the side and in the car park which will hopefully be an improvement on the current situation. No progress has been made as yet in relation to the £3,302 Section 106 monies and a reminder that the clean up morning is on Sunday 1st October.

Chairs have been donated to the Village Fete Committee and thanks again expressed to that Committee for the successful event held, particularly as the careful planning ensured that major traffic congestion was avoided on the day.

(ii) Environment (inc Public Rights of Way (PROW))

Public Rights of Way

Cllr B Morris reported a mixed picture. A number of footpaths were very overgrown, including Footpath 25 being impassable due to a fallen tree, whilst others had been cleared of such issues.

(iii) Highways

Cllr W O'Neill reported that the roads in at Green Tye and Perry Green were open. However, action taken to protect the grass verges had not been effective as damage still occurs. The outstanding repairs to Kettle Green Lane, together with other outstanding projects, continue to be raised with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) and Ringway.

In addition, Cllr W O'Neill reported that a quote had been received for 3 new replacement lights from Ringway amounting to £10,029.97 + VAT. It is an expensive project as the work will involve some road closures, traffic management and the new lights are a vintage design in keeping with their locations. Once these are replaced, a plan will be developed to convert other lamps and to decommission those not needed.

In response to a question, the Clerk outlined the reasons why only 1 quote was received. Mainly due to the nature of the work being undertaken, it was considered less risky to use the contractor that is responsible for the maintenance of the lighting within the village. Whilst the purchase is for new lights, it is a replacement of lights within the totality of lights owned by the Parish Council. Finally, in order to obtain lights that are in keeping with the village, the availability of suppliers is limited which is reflected in the fact that it took Ringway, with its purchasing power, a number of months to be able to provide the quote under consideration.

It was confirmed that the lights in question are owned by the Parish Council in response to a question. It is expected that the work will be paid for from the funds included within the budget for the year. Cllr I Hunt outlined alternative financing options, for example a PWLB loan, and concurred that it should be funded from the budget set.

The action to be taken with the old light columns was discussed given that the quote refers to taking these to the tip. As there is a market value for these, highlighted by Cllr B Morris as columns can be purchased on EBay, it was agreed that the columns be retained by the Parish Council for subsequent re-sale. This should be reflected in the quote, as a reduction in the cost to Ringway of disposal. Cllr W O'Neill agreed to follow this up. If agreed by Ringway, a temporary home will need to be found for the columns.

RESOLVED to approve the quote from Ringway for £10,029.97 + VAT for 3 replacement street lights.

Cllr W O'Neill was thanked for all the work done.

(iv) Media

No matters to report.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that Lynne Mills had resigned from the Steering Group and she was thanked for the valuable contribution she'd made. Focus continues to be on preparation of the display material for the consultation event on Sunday 17th September which will now start an hour earlier at 11am, and has been advertised widely in the parish.

As there is now a vacancy on the Steering Group, a volunteer is sought to take on, in particular, the management and further development of the website.

Finally, there will be a public meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in October to discuss the initial results of the consultation.

(vi) Security

Cllr Mrs J Liversage stated that there are no crime statistics to report this month. She also reported that she is still seeking a meeting with the new PCSO (Stephen Blanks) responsible for Much Hadham but she has not been able to get a hold of him.

(vii) Other

The Chairman reported that photographs of the telephone box at Station Road had been received which highlighted how good it was now looking.

It was also reported that there was a 'Scouts Night Hike' on the 30th September, with Moor Place being used for car parking.

17/144. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that he now has a new role at East Herts Council, that of 'Rural Champion', which focuses on 4 areas specifically. These are:

- Rural isolation;
- Community transport;
- Economic development; and
- Parish Councils.

Within each area, Cllr I Devonshire explained the key problems together with potential solutions, some of which are already underway. See Appendix A for further detail.

There was no report from Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) as he was not present but he had given his apologies.

17/145. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Financial interests

A resident directed questions, via the Chairman, to Cllrs that sit on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, relating to financial interests. The Chairman reminded the resident of the process in place to record financial interests and that none had been declared in relation to the doctor's surgery.

In addition, Cllr I Hunt as Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, highlighted that the site in question is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster and is not for sale as far he is aware. He reiterated that the process to record financial interests is being complied with by those on the Steering Group.

(ii) Transport

To assist Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) in his new role, a resident highlighted that a transport issue is that the buses that come through the village do not have disabled access. It is known that some drivers will assist passengers on to the bus but some won't. This was noted.

In addition, Cllr B Morris suggested that the legal position in relation to disabled rights should be investigated as he believes that all buses should have disabled access.

(iii) Superfast broadband

A resident made reference to the presentation undertaken by BT to a previous Parish Council meeting, at which the indications were that superfast broadband would have been available by now. In response, the Chairman stated that the delay had been the need to upgrade the exchange at Puckeridge. As the infrastructure locally appears to have been completed, she suggested contacting BT for an update.

17/146. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 1st August 2017 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

17/147. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(i) Payment of Accounts

The Clerk explained that, as reported by Cllr K Twort, the works at the Pavilion were nearly finished therefore it was considered appropriate to approve the payment to EMC Contracts at this meeting. The cheque will be released once Cllr K Twort is satisfied that there are no outstanding matters.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Pavilion is not used for Steering Group meetings due to the lack of suitable tables and chairs, together with an acoustics issue for older residents.

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not vote due to the declared interest.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - SEPTEMBER 2017

Chq	Payable to	For	Amount
793	MH Bowling Club	NP meetings 9/5/17 & 13/6/17 (NP)	30.00
794	Ruth Fleetwood	Project Manager (NP)	560.00
795	Green Tye Mission Hall	Hall hire 1st August	27.00
796	Martin Adams	Land Registry searches (NP)	28.00
797	Ian Hunt	Website, surveys, land registry, mapping software & photocopying (NP)	357.35
798	BDO LLP	External audit	360.00
800	MH Sports Assoc	Pavilion electricity	116.94
801	EMC Contracts	Pavilion works (funded s106 monies)	7,728.00
Total payments			<u>9,207.29</u>

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

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2017/18 was received. There were no matters to highlight.

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the unrepresented cheques total includes the cheques approved at this meeting.

(iii) Annual Accounts 2016/17

The Clerk reported that the external audit had been completed in August and the Parish Council's Annual Return had been qualified. For the 2015/16 accounts, the process for the inspection period had not been followed as the period started before the Annual Return had been signed. In 2016/17, on the Annual Governance Statement, the question in relation to the inspection period should have been answered 'no' as a consequence of this as it related to 'in year' as opposed to 'for the year'. This was challenged with the external auditor since only an element of the process was not followed for the 2015/16 accounts but the qualification was automatically applied. This qualification will not be repeated as the correct process for the inspection period was followed for the 2016/17 accounts.

The audited Annual Return was approved and the matter arising noted.

17/148. URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr B Morris raised the lack of notification for the specific road closure at Kettle Green Lane on the 22nd to 24th August although the TRO notice had been received and circulated earlier. The Chairman reported that this had been raised with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) whose investigations were inconclusive but potentially the road closure was related to work being undertaken by Gigaclear.

17/149. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

17/150. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 3rd October 2017, at 7.30 pm in the Green Tye Mission Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

REPORT TO MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL – CLLR I DEVONSHIRE (EHC)

I have been given a new role – Rural Champion

1 Rural Isolation

In many villages some individuals, particularly the elderly, can become isolated. Around 10% of the population aged over 65 is lonely all or most of the time. In some parts of East Herts, the only in-depth interaction they have is with their GP. GPs can often spot issues but do not pass this information on due to confidentiality issues.

Lack of access to services historically creates additional problems as the issues are harder to spot and it takes longer before they are.

Potential solutions:

East Herts are about to take on a Social Prescribing Co-ordinator. Rurally isolated individuals will be referred, for example, by GP Surgeries or through Local Councillors.

Sign post more rurally isolated individuals that qualify to the Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS), which ensures regular if brief interactions.

Create comprehensive guidance for GPs on what is and is not a confidentiality issue.

2 Community Transport

Cuts by the County Council to subsidised bus services together with the way bus services in the UK are legislated mean that increasing numbers of rural areas are being cut-off from transport options if the individual lacks access to a car. There are very few routes operated by commercial operators in rural parts of the district simply because they are not deemed viable. This can create rural isolation in the elderly, disabled, young and income deprived. Furthermore, for those of working age, lack of transport access can exacerbate rural economic deprivation, cutting these groups off from opportunities for jobs or skills.

Solutions underway:

Some parish/town councils have set-up community transport schemes funded by between one and all three tiers of local government. These are good examples of community transport initiatives in place, for example, Sawbo bus, Hadham Hopper, Buntingford Cat and Bishop's Stortford Shuttle. Other alternatives exist such as the CVS led car share scheme which is not running at full capacity.

Potential solutions:

Increasingly there is a move towards 'on demand' services, for example 'Uber'. This largely reflects a growing trend away from owning and towards hiring, particularly as car ownership for young people is becoming increasingly unaffordable.

3 Economic development

Although East Herts is blessed with significant rural wealth, there are still areas that suffer rural poverty and rural economic deprivation remains an issue in parts of the district. The lack of transport access for those on the lower end of the income scale can act as a block for them to work themselves out of poverty.

A major issue for rural communities is lack of acceptable Internet Speed meaning they cannot operate viable businesses from their local area due to up/download speed restrictions. While connecting counties will bring fast broadband to 93% of households over the next three years, that still leave a final 7% without access.

Solutions underway:

Existing rural community transport schemes – see above.

The Rural Payments Agency's Eastern Plateau programme has seen East Herts direct EU funding to projects developing jobs and businesses in the district's rural areas.

Potential solutions:

Compiling the various other broadband schemes available, promoting/making these available to rural parish councils and rural residents.

4 Parish Councils

As the local organisers for most rural communities, Parish Councils are important to achieving the goals above: reducing isolations, alleviating rural deprivation and improving rural transport access.

Potential actions:

The Rural Champion is to be promoted to Parish Councils as a one stop shop for rural matters within East Herts. The actual day to day practicalities of these issues will be dealt with by Council officers.

The Rural Champion to address the Town and Parish Council Conference.