

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 8th January 2019, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, Green Room, at 7:30 pm.

#Cllr Mrs K Chesters

*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chairman)

*Cllr Mrs J Liversage

*Cllr Mrs M O'Neill

*Cllr W O'Neill

Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chairman)

*Cllr C Thompson

*Cllr K Twort

* denotes present and # denotes co-opted at the meeting (minute: 19/7).

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and 25 members of the public.

In the absence of Cllr Mrs P Taylor, Cllr I Hunt chaired the meeting.

19/1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs P Taylor.

19/2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

19/3. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

19/4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair highlighted that the Herts County Council (HCC) Minerals Local Plan included the proposal to turn Briggens Estate, along the A414, into a quarry. A proposal previously put forward by Chaldean Estate for a quarry at Barwick had been rejected. Neighbouring Parish Councils are campaigning to stop this proposal with further information available online (www.stopthequarry.site). HCC will be consulting on the soundness of this plan later this month.

19/5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd December 2018 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

19/6. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

A revised report will be available for the next meeting.

19/7. CO-OPTION OF PARISH COUNCILLOR

The Chair reminded those present that the resignation of two Cllrs in November 2018 created vacancies that could be filled through co-option as the next election is being held within 6 months of these resignations.

In line with the Co-option Policy approved at the last meeting, an application was received from Kristie Chesters. Following an opportunity to introduce herself, it was RESOLVED to co-opt her as a Parish Councillor and the appropriate governance documents were signed.

The Chair highlighted that one vacancy remains and details on how to apply can be obtained from the Clerk and the website.

19/8. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Sports Association

Cllr K Twort reiterated the point made at the last meeting that the Sports Association is facing financial difficulties. Reliance is placed on the success of the annual Fete and, if the Fete was not to take place, the Sports Association would fold. After taking into account the Fete grant for 2018, there is a shortfall of £10,000 and the intention is to seek additional funding through grants.

The Chair accepted that both the Sports Association and the Village Hall are dependent on revenues from the Fete and there is a real concern regarding the lack of volunteers to organise this event. The Parish Council owns both the Recreation Ground and the Village Hall and, therefore, there is a recognition that it should have a contingency plan should the existing management bodies be unable to continue due to lack of funds.

At the last meeting, it was agreed that the arrangements between the Parish Council and the management bodies should be reviewed, to understand the legal basis of all parties involved, the boundaries of responsibilities and what financial assistance can be provided. It was agreed that a "task and finish" group should be established to facilitate this.

Village Hall

Cllr W O'Neill stated there was nothing to report apart from that a new caretaker and cleaner are required, and local residents are invited to reply. It was acknowledged that this hasn't been advertised as yet.

Playground

The Clerk highlighted that Broadmead Leisure had completed most of the remedial works approved at the last meeting. The remainder would be completed this month, weather permitting.

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

Public Rights of Way

The Clerk provided the following updates:

- Bridleway 38 – remains of the old bridge have been removed and the site secured. The Environment Agency require that no works are undertaken until the end of the breeding season for salmon and trout and, whilst it is doubted that these fish are present, an exemption would take the same length of time. The new bridge will be prefabricated and installed on site in March; and
- P3 projects – the bridge on footpath 29 and the kissing gates on footpaths 21 and 23 will be completed soon.

(iii) Highways

Cllr W O'Neill reported that:

- the insurance claim is still being processed for the Almshouse streetlight;
- why the redundant street lights haven't been switched off is being investigated;
- the Traffic Working Party has cleaned signs at either end of the village and remaining traffic calming signs will also be done;
- Friends of Broadfield Bus Shelter have tidied it up;
- liaison with Ringway continues to ensure various outstanding items of work are completed;
- several road gullies cleared as part of rolling 3 year plan;
- currently fewer potholes with milder winter but reminder to use HCC's fault reporting service; and
- a couple of lights are not working and these have been reported to Ringway.

In response to a question from Cllr Mrs J Liversage regarding the bright lights in Church Lane, Cllr W O'Neill stated these have been replaced with LEDs and a clear lantern. These are on all night and this can't be changed until all the Parish Council's street lights are replaced and handed over to HCC.

In addition, it was identified that the salt delivery requested in 2018 had not been received.

(iv) Media

None.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt stated that at the last meeting he outlined the reasoning for supporting the development of housing, including affordable housing, to the left of Moor Place Gate, and there are no new facts to change that decision.

In addition, Cllr I Hunt reminded those present about the consultation process that the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is subjected to. Given the timings of this process, together with the fact that the pre-submission public consultation cannot take place within 6 weeks of the election in May, this consultation will not take place until after the election has been completed and the new Parish Council has met. This is an unfortunate delay but an unavoidable one.

On a different matter, it was highlighted that Cllrs have received, via the Clerk, a copy of an unsigned letter dated 30 December from the Moor Place Heritage Group addressed to the Steering Group. The letter comments on how the pre-submission consultation should be conducted and its content, with concerns raised about the extent of public awareness of the options.

The extent of public consultation is perhaps not fully appreciated by the Heritage Group. The Parish Council is required to present to the examiner as part of its NP submission a report on the Steering Group's public consultation activity. This report is already 78 pages even before the pre-submission consultation – there has been no lack of public consultation, information and transparency over the 3½ years that this project has taken so far.

The receipt of the letter from the Heritage Group is acknowledged. The Steering Group will consider it prior to the next public consultation.

Cllr J Liversage commented that it is important to remember that the NP follows a process, including opportunities for public consultation.

(vi) Security

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that a man had been arrested in relation to the armed robbery at the Londis Store in December 2018. Since the last meeting, 2 items had been stolen and vehicle interference reported on the High Street. Everyone was reminded that 101 should be called for all non-emergency matters.

(vii) Other

None.

19/9. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that there had been changes in key personnel:

- Kevin Steptoe, Head of Planning, has been seconded to the Gilston project and EHC are currently recruiting to replace him, together with a number of Planning Officers to replace those who recently left; and
- Liz Watts, Chief Executive, is leaving.

In relation to the Fete, it was highlighted that there had been no response to the advert placed in the December Parish Magazine for help to run this event. The Fete Committee is meeting soon and will be considering the impact of this.

Finally, if anyone knew of any heating oil clubs operating in the area, could the details be passed to him.

19/10. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Moor Place Gate

A resident, on behalf of themselves and the Heritage Group, spoke in relation to Moor Place and a copy of the speech is at Appendix A.

The points made in the speech were supported by a number of residents' present. Further points were made that nothing had been seen to show how the listed building requirements, of the house and gates, were being dealt with, and that the Parish Council needed to realise how many residents were against this proposal.

The Chair responded that an offer had been made for a meeting between Steering Group's Planning Consultant and the Heritage Group before Christmas which didn't happen. The meeting is still available as an option to discuss the issues raised further.

The Chair also highlighted that the decision to include the Moor Place development rather than a windfall housing allowance was to address the mandate from previous public consultations for affordable housing in the village. This is the only site that can deliver this.

In addition, a reminder that the Neighbourhood Plan is a statement of planning policies and not a planning application therefore it will not have the same level of detail.

19/11. TENNIS HUT PROPOSAL

A proposal for a tennis hut was outlined in a presentation made by Michael Tindale. The Club are not asking the Parish Council for funding as match funding from East Herts Council, through Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) is in place. The Club has 200 members, 3 courts and would like to expand and hence the need for a tennis hut.

Much Hadham tennis club has a good reputation as it includes children and allows adults to have taster sessions. The proposed tennis hut, sited by the courts, will enable the Club to have changing, toilet and refreshment facilities.

In response to questions from Cllrs, it was highlighted that the facilities in the Pavilion or Bowls Club were too far from the tennis courts to be used, particularly by unaccompanied children and on dark nights. In addition, it is believed that planning permission is not required, and power and water is already accessible at the courts.

It was agreed that further discussions were required to cover the technical aspects of the proposal, the covenants in place on the Recreation Ground and legal responsibilities.

Note – a hard copy of the detailed proposal was tabled at the meeting.

19/12. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - JANUARY 2019

Chq	Payable to	For	Amount
904	MH Bowls Club	Hire for meetings (NP)	105.00
905	BA MH Landscapes	Maintenance at burial grounds Jul - Dec '18	1,080.00
Total payments			<u>1,185.00</u>

Cheques will be signed and despatched following the meeting.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement to date for 2018/19 was circulated with the agenda. The Clerk highlighted that whilst NatWest have paid compensation of £50, this was not as a result of a full conversation about the problem the Parish Council faced. Further compensation will be sought.

In addition, the Chair stated that as part of the NP grant would be unspent at the end of March, this portion will be returned. The Parish Council will seek to reapply for it in the new financial year

The summary financial position is detailed overleaf and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix B.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 8 JANUARY 2019

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2018	32,848.47	14,249.65	47,098.12
Income	81,914.86	2,010.00	83,924.86
Expenditure	- 55,522.34	- 1,964.29	- 57,486.63
Closing balance	<u>59,240.99</u>	<u>14,295.36</u>	<u>73,536.35</u>

Note: the following items are included in the Total Fund Balances:

(1) Earmarked for Neighbourhood Plan (balance)	63.08
(2) Section 106 receipts	6,070.00
(3) Earmarked for Neighbourhood Plan (2018/19 grant balance)	3,375.50
	<u>9,508.58</u>

(iii) Precept 2019/20 and Forward Financial Plan

The Clerk highlighted that the only change made to the budget and forward financial plan shared at the December meeting is to include provision for a full pay award for the Clerk – an additional 0.6%.

Proposal is to maintain the precept at £39,000. As yet, the tax base for 2019/20 has not been provided by East Herts but the expectation is that this will have increased and result in a reduction in the Band D equivalent, currently showing at £41.49.

Whilst the New Homes Bonus has been included, expected to be £8,243, East Herts has yet to confirm the scheme will be continued and on what basis. If it is not received, the Parish Council has sufficient reserves to make up the shortfall.

The Chair proposed, given the earlier discussion regarding handing back an element of the latest NP Grant, that income and expenditure should be increased in the coming year by £6,000 to reflect this. This would not affect the precept.

RESOLVED to approve the budget presented, as amended by the £6,000 adjustment referred to above, for 2019/20 and determine the precept at £39,000.

RESOLVED to approve the forward financial plan.

19/13. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2018 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

19/14. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

19/15. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk highlighted that East Herts Council were launching a lottery at the end of the month. The East Herts Lottery will enable people to support local good causes and have the opportunity to play weekly and potentially win £25,000.

In addition, the Clerk reported that the Hardship Fund, managed by the St Andrew's Church, had been used prior to Christmas to purchase a cooker for someone in need.

18/16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th February 2019, at 7:30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall, Green Room.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

RESIDENTS' SPEECH – MOOR PLACE GATE (MPG)

I want to express my, and the Heritage Group's very real concerns over the recent decision of the SG [Steering Group] to give high priority to development at MPG, when, after due consultation just a year ago this option received, and I quote, "by far the most opposition". I was therefore astonished to read about this reversal in the September Parish Magazine as to all intents and purposes myself and many others thought this was the end of consideration of this site. I could find no indication of the process to resurrect this option on the SG's website for 2018, indeed there are no Minutes or Agendas for the whole of the year.

A petition has been raised to stop this, and, as you may be aware there are well over 300 signatories gained in just 2 months. We believe that the proposal demonstrates significant and demonstrable harm to the historic centre of the village which outweighs any possible housing benefits. Following newly published Guidance it is clear that alternative site options to include affordable and or social housing could readily be gained using a "windfall" housing allowance.

The serious objections to the MPG proposal, as originally articulated by residents in June 17, centred on the adverse environmental and landscape impacts, an increase in cars in a highly congested area of the high street near the school, light from the tennis courts, and its location in a greenfield site that District policy aims to protect. Other statutory protections must also be observed as the proposed site is adjacent to Grade 2 listed buildings or monuments, a listed gateway to the Manor House, within a Conservation area which is also a site of Archaeological Significance having "Priority Views" and I quote "...worthy of the greatest care, attention and protection".

A recent Planning Application for stables and a tack room on the "Nature Reserve area" demonstrates that both ends-of the Conservation area are now under threat of building creep. Is this really what we want?

As a scientist it shocked me to find in the December 2018 Parish magazine a list of the merits of the proposed MPG site without the counter balancing list of disadvantages which are absolutely necessary to enable Parishioners to fairly weigh the options, *as indeed they thought they had already done*. The fact that one of the so-called advantages of the MPG proposal (Point 2) is that Statutory protection from development of the North side of the drive 'will be given,' carries no weight when Statutory protections of the South side can apparently be waived at a stroke!!

It is therefore paramount that in the interests of transparency and balance, the next stage of consultation should show the pros and cons of the two strategic options i.e. with Moor Place Gate and without it, despite rather worryingly, the statements from the SG in the December Parish Magazine now indicating a "firm conclusion" in favour of the benefits of MPG.

The catch phrase used by the PC [Parish Council] is Our Parish Our Future; I honestly believe that those who succeed us in the village will forever question our motives if they see the MPG development proceed, the associated area being the Jewel in the Crown of Much Hadham, while areas such as the Jolly Waggoners fall into further dilapidation. The contrast could not be more stark and history will not be kind to us!

We would ask the Parish Council and the SG to think again for the preservation of the very special Village Heritage in MH, as in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework there is compelling evidence that windfall sites will continue to arise which would enable the MPG proposal to revert to its original Consultation status of least favoured, most objected to, and to be replaced elsewhere.

- Please Minute the numbers of petitioners against the project in 2 months Some 328 on 6th Jan 19
- Please attach this statement to the Minutes

Moor Place Heritage Group

08.01.19

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 8 JANUARY 2019

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2019	2019	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	39,000.00	39,000.00	
Litter Agency	3,950.00	4,086.91	
New Homes Bonus	3,223.00	9,804.00	Latest Bonus information was not available when budget set
Pavilion income	500.00	698.00	
Grant		18,443.59	Grant for Neighbourhood Plan (£8,235); grant from Village Hall (£9,832.65) & grant from Sports Association (£375.94)
Other	5.00	128.99	£60 rent from Henry Moore Foundation; £50 compensation from NatWest & improved interest rates on Business Reserve account
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	9,753.37	VAT reclaim for 2 years
TOTAL INCOME	51,678.00	81,914.86	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	6,600.00	4,997.88	
PWLB loan repayment	5,387.46	5,387.46	
Administration costs	2,500.00	1,206.39	
Insurance	3,600.00	2,212.72	
Audit fees	720.00	720.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	2,200.00	335.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	5,700.00	6,588.82	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	3,006.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,000.00	624.04	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	1,770.00	2,108.07	This is the prior year charge
Street lighting (replacement programme)	-	-	
Pavilion	1,770.00	2,407.45	Includes £420 for burst tap repair
Grants and donations	1,000.00	300.00	
Neighbourhood Plan	2,000.00	5,656.68	Part of this expenditure is funded by grant
Village Hall - soffits and fascias	-	9,832.65	
Capital - Speed Indicator Device	6,800.00	5,100.00	
Capital - laptop	600.00	-	
Maintenance - Red Lion bus shelter repair	1,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	5,039.18	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	51,655.46	55,522.34	