

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council virtual meeting held on Tuesday,
5th May 2020 at 7:37 pm.

*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)

Cllr Mrs J Liversage

*Cllr Mrs H Maduhu

*Cllr D McDonald

Cllr M McPherson-Pottle

*Cllr B O'Neill

*Cllr S Smith

Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chair)

*Cllr K Twort

* denotes present

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and 6 members of the public.

Prior to the meeting starting, the Chair briefly welcomed residents to the virtual meeting, apologising in advance for any technical glitches and advice on how to reconnect if any occur. In addition, all those present were reminded that they should assume the meeting is being recorded.

20/54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs P Taylor. In her absence, Cllr I Hunt chaired the meeting.

No apologies were received from Cllr M McPherson-Pottle so his absence was not approved.

Late apologies were received from Cllr Mrs J Liversage during agenda item 20/62 as she had been held up at work.

20/55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The Chair declared an interest in a cheque to be approved (agenda item 20/64(i)).

The Clerk reported that an application for a dispensation had been received from the Chair which had been circulated to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. Dispensation was being sought to enable the Chair to remain in charge of the meeting whilst agenda item 20/64(i) was dealt with on the condition that he did not participate in the vote to approve but he could participate in the discussion. RESOLVED to approve this dispensation. The Chair did not participate in the vote for this item.

No other declarations were made or applications for dispensations sought.

20/56. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None. However, it was noted that Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) had another meeting to attend at 7:50 pm therefore agreed that the agenda would be re-ordered. Cllr G McAndrew would give his update after the next agenda item and this update has been recorded in the correct position – see Minute ref: 20/62.

20/57. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- the legal power to hold virtual meetings was granted on 2nd April 2020 in the Coronavirus Regulations¹ and will last until May 2021 unless withdrawn before then therefore it is “business as usual” as far as practicable;
- normally the May meeting is the annual meeting at which the Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee appointments are made – a legal requirement. The Coronavirus Regulations have removed the annual meeting requirement until May 2021, or earlier if the Parish Council decides to hold one, so all existing appointments continue; and
- Cllr M McPherson-Pottle has now been absent from Parish Council meetings without approval for 6 consecutive months and has moved away from the parish. Under the Local Government Act 1972 s.85., he ceases to be a member of the Parish Council at the conclusion of this meeting and a vacancy will arise. Whilst the Notice of Vacancy will be posted, if an election is requested by 10 electors, the poll would not be held until 6th May 2021, in line with the Coronavirus Regulations. If no election is requested, the Parish Council will be able to co-opt and further details can be found on the website or by contacting the Clerk or a Cllr.

20/58. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd March 2020 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

The Chair highlighted that the April minutes were not available so approval would be deferred to the June meeting. He also apologised that the parish magazine stated they were on the website.

20/59. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Clerk highlighted that most outstanding matters would be covered by subsequent agenda items.

¹ Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

20/60. ANNUAL VILLAGE/PARISH MEETING

The Chair stated that it is a legal requirement that a parish holds an annual meeting between 1 March and 1 June and this is usually hosted by the Parish Council although not a Parish Council meeting. The Coronavirus Regulations have not removed the requirement to have this meeting but have not made it possible to have this meeting virtually. Given the social distancing rules and the guidance from the National Association of Local Councils, RESOLVED to cancel the annual village/parish meeting.

20/61. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllr K Twort reported that he is waiting for the report regarding the boundary trees at the Recreation Ground from the arborist.

Village Hall

Cllr B O'Neill stated that the Village Hall remains shut and losing money. He also highlighted that it is looking less likely that the annual fete will happen which usually grants money for repairs etc. The Clerk stated that action had been taken to reduce costs as much as possible at the Village Hall.

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

Cllr S Smith provided an update on the following matters:

- oil spillage – no response from the Environment Agency to Herts County Council (HCC) as yet but there is no sign of oil in the river or its feeding streams following the recent heavy downpours; and
- fly tipping – action continuing to get the Environment Agency to remove 3 items from the stream alongside Danebridge Road.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith reported on the following matters:

Footbridge on Footpath 20 (runs alongside St Andrew's Church) – footbridge is in need of repair or possibly replacement, but it is safe enough in the meantime. HCC will resolve this as soon as possible. When the Environment Agency inspect the bridge, a request will be made to remove the door discarded in the river at this point.

Way marker posts – a number have been repaired or replaced.

Diversion of FP11/10 – Kettle Green Lane – still waiting for the diversion order.

General: been good to see villagers taking a walk along the footpaths and country lanes as part of their allowed exercise during the lockdown.

In addition, Cllr S Smith reported that with the present lock down measures, the planters initiative had come to a standstill.

Cllr B O’Neill highlighted that it is possible that the door was put in the river by the footbridge to prevent the bank from being eroded at that point. Also, he reported that the river fly surveys had ceased due to the coronavirus.

(iii) Highways

Cllr B O’Neill reported that further meetings were required to resolve the costings for the street lighting project, and to ensure that more Cllrs have a fuller understanding of what it entailed. He confirmed that the project contact was aware that the Parish Council was not happy with the price increases.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk would pursue the quote for the repair to the street light outside Londis, requested in March.

Cllr S Smith reported that repair work is ongoing at the top of Winding Hill.

The Chair reported that the B1004 had been resurfaced at the southern end of the village towards the Jolly Waggoners.

(iv) Media

Cllr H Maduhu reported that posts had been made on Facebook detailing where to get help during lock down.

The Clerk highlighted that she’d been informed that future website support will be split between the existing supplier – IOW Geek – and Wight Computers Ltd who will take on the running of day-to-day hosting services and renewals. IOW Geek will continue for project related work such as re-vamping the website.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair reported that the external consultants, AECOM, are continuing with the Strategic Environmental Assessment. He had also updated the FAQs on the Neighbourhood Plan website to reflect the current position with the project so anyone with questions about the Plan are encouraged to look there first.

(vi) Security

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that there had been a series of burglaries in Much Hadham recently at both business and residential properties. 4 of the 5 incidents happened on the same evening and in close proximity to one another on Kettle Green Lane. Suspects have targeted outbuildings and removed property from within, mainly tools and gardening equipment. All residents should remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity immediately.

In addition, OWL reports are reminding people, amongst other things, to:

- keep sheds locked;
- secure their back gardens by locking gates; and
- visibly mark tools and gardening equipment with their postcode and house number.

(vii) Other

Supply of water to travellers

The Chair reported that the travellers at Chapel Lane do not have a water supply to their site and it had been alleged that they were stealing water instead, from a variety of sources including garden taps, businesses and fire hydrants.

Residents around Spindle Bridge learned that Affinity Water were planning to erect a standpipe at the junction with Bromley Lane as a temporary measure, with the intention that the travellers would use it to fill containers to take back to their site. The residents were naturally concerned that this site did not seem appropriate in terms of highway safety and that it would encourage non-essential journeys into the parish.

On behalf of parishioners, the Chair spoke to a director at Affinity Water. Other parties involved included HCC, the police, the relevant government minister and Little Hadham parish council. Affinity Water highlighted that they are legally obliged to supply water and journeys to obtain it are considered essential travel.

It is now proposed that this short-term supply is provided from a hydrant at Jobbers Wood instead, pending the installation in the long-term of a mains connection at the travellers' site. The travellers are believed to have paid for this short-term measure and applied for a licence for the mains connection, although this is likely to be some months away.

In discussion, it was clarified that:

- Jobbers Wood was chosen as the site as not near residential housing and therefore considered safer;
- Hydrant will not be on private land i.e. not on the fields at Jobbers Wood nor the allotments; and
- Suppliers of other utilities to the travellers' site will no doubt be engaging in the usual way.

Land for sale at Kettle Green Lane

The Chair explained that the top half of Wheatfield on the south side of Kettle Green Lane has been divided into plots for sale.

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) was asked to comment. He reported that a request had been made for an Article 4 direction to remove planning permission from this site. However, requests for such directions have to go to the Secretary of State, therefore it is unlikely to be granted. He also commented that there is a perception that the plots of land are being bought by travellers. East Herts have investigated and this does not appear to be the case as plots are being bought by companies.

The Chair reported that there is a monthly auction and, as there is no prospect for housing on this site, no co-ordinated efforts to buy the site have been noticed. He also commented that the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) are aware of similar “plot lands”. A potential issue is how the land is maintained once divided into plots, for example hedges.

Following discussion, consideration to be given to writing to the Landowner and selling agent to remind them of their legal responsibilities in not mis-representing the land as having the potential for development when this is not the case.

20/62. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) stated that he expected the regular meetings between himself, Highways (HCC) and the Parish Council would resume in the coming months and provided the following update:

- HGV survey in Perry Green/Green Tye was on hold due to the coronavirus outbreak;
- the speed and volume survey in Perry Green/Green Tye was completed in mid-March and the data is currently being analysed;
- approximate costings and scheme details for the St Thomas’ triangle have been passed to Cllr Mrs P Taylor;
- the speed and volume data for Danebridge Road/Malting Lane to be re-evaluated;
- tree work in Church Lane has been completed; and
- the school advisory speed limit work at Tower Hill has been completed.

In response to a question, Cllr G McAndrew stated that he is currently looking at grant applications in relation to supporting communities through the coronavirus. Grants are being dealt with through Operation Shield.

Note – this update was given after agenda item 20/57 to enable Cllr G McAndrew to attend another meeting.

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported on the following items:

- the local “Halo” residents are helping 83 households, effectively 100 people, via a buddy system of assistance for shopping, prescriptions or phone calls. Other aspects of support are in development;
- East Herts Council are actively working to ensure that businesses are accessing the available business rate grant which must be applied for – 1700 businesses have received this grant so far and a further 800 have yet to apply;
- if residents are having difficulty with council tax or rents, they should phone East Herts as soon as possible as the Council will try to assist;
- East Herts Council meetings are also being held via Zoom; and
- brown bin collections will be recommencing from 21st May for Much Hadham.

In response to a question, Cllr I Devonshire stated that if a business doesn't pay business rates, they should phone the Council to check whether they are eligible for any business rate grant.

Referring back to item 20/61 (viii), Cllr D McDonald suggested that should the 28 day permission to have caravans on the Kettle Green Lane plots be removed, the Council should write to inform people of this. Cllr I Devonshire stated that Council Enforcement Officers responsible for Chapel Lane will be keeping an eye on the Kettle Green Lane site. The Chair added that fencing had been added to prevent driving on to the rest of Wheatfield.

20/63. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Travellers and Jobbers Wood

A resident raised concern that the allotment plots at Jobbers Wood could be taken over by travellers once the water standpipe is in place.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- the allotment project seems to have ceased but a reasonable amount of security is still in place;
- being beneath the electricity pylons discourages settlement; and
- travellers have already acquired another site locally, in Little Hadham.

20/64. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown overleaf, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not vote due to his declared interest but continued to chair this item due to the dispensation received earlier. (Minute ref: 20/55)

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - MAY 2020

Chq etc	Payable to	For	Amount
1002	E.ON	Lighting for war memorial	35.87
1003	BA ICCM	Membership fee relating to cemetery management	95.00
1004	BA MH Landscapes	Maintenance at burial grounds Jan - Mar '20	540.00
1005	MH Sports Association	Grass cutting at Recreation Ground	1,200.00
1006	MH Sports Association	Pavilion water	19.40
1007	Ian Hunt	Zoom for virtual meetings	107.90
1008	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (May)	334.00
DD	BA Affinity for Business	Water bill for Perry Green	1.30
DD	PWLB	Loan repayment	2,693.73
Total payments			£5,107.20

Cheques will be signed and despatched following the meeting.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2020/21 to date was received. The summary financial position is detailed below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix A. It was highlighted that the first half of the precept for the year had been received.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 5 MAY 2020

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2020	43,057.54	18,742.76	61,800.30
Income	21,500.00	330.00	21,830.00
Expenditure	- 6,757.53	- 562.70	- 7,320.23
Closing balance	<u>57,800.01</u>	<u>18,510.06</u>	<u>76,310.07</u>
Total Fund Balances			<u><u>76,310.07</u></u>

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

(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation	<u>4,570.00</u>
	<u>4,570.00</u>

20/65. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 3rd March 2020 and 7th April 2020 be received and the decisions taken be ratified. The Chair noted that the 7th April was a virtual meeting arranged prior to the enabling powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020 being in place and that planning decisions submitted to East Herts Council were caveated with that fact.

20/66. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

20/67. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk highlighted the following matters:

- Herts County Council have provided information for celebrating VE Day 75 locally, including an online exhibition to which audio clips and other VE Day history will be added during the 8th May; and
- the latest A120 Bypass newsletter (April) is available. Work has been largely focused on earth works for the River Ash dam embankment and the new Albury Road bridge, with the road to Albury remaining completely closed until the end of May.

Further information about these items will be added to the Parish Council website.

The Chair reminded those present that in respect of VE day 75 there would be a 2 minute silence at 11am and to remember to have a glass handy to toast our national heroes at 3pm.

20/68. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 2nd June 2020, at 7:30 pm. Arrangements to be confirmed but likely to be in the same format as tonight if restrictions are not lifted. Any suggestions for improvement on the meeting format can be sent to the Clerk.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:49 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 5 MAY 2020

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2021	DATE	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	43,000.00	21,500.00	
Litter Agency	4,235.00	-	
New Homes Bonus	10,000.00	-	
Pavilion income	1,000.00	-	
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	-	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	-	
TOTAL INCOME	63,595.00	21,500.00	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,000.00	-	
PWLB loan repayment	5,387.46	2,693.73	
Administration costs	3,300.00	895.00	
Insurance	3,900.00	756.00	
Audit fees	730.00	-	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	-	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	21,800.00	1,200.00	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	668.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,100.00	34.16	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Street lighting (replacement programme)	6,100.00	-	
Pavilion	3,400.00	369.40	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	-	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	1,500.00	-	
Neighbourhood Plan	2,000.00	-	
Capital - Roller shutter at Pavilion	2,000.00	-	
Capital - Bollards at Moor Place Gate	800.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	141.24	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	71,060.46	6,757.53	