

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council virtual meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd March 2021 at 7:30 pm.

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton
*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)
*Cllr Mrs J Liversage
Cllr Mrs H Maduhu
*Cllr D McDonald

*Cllr B O'Neill
*Cllr S Smith
*Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chair)
*Cllr K Twort

* denotes present

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

21/37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absences were received and approved from Cllr Mrs K Hamilton and Cllr Mrs H Maduhu.

21/38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

21/39. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/40. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair passed on congratulations to the owners of the Londis shop, worthy winners of a Hertfordshire Heroes award. In addition, she encouraged people to take up the Covid vaccine when advised to do so.

21/41. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd February 2021 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

21/42. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The report would be circulated by the Chair after the meeting and most matters will be covered by specific agenda items. It was noted that no action was being taken in relation to the basketball area until the weather improves and a response from the developer regarding the copied village sign was still being chased.

21/43. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllr K Twort reported that football would be restarting at the beginning of April and, in relation to accessing the Pavilion, Cllr D McDonald stated that the guidance supplied to the football team from the Football Association had been requested.

Cllr D McDonald also reported that incidents around the Pavilion were being looked into, with a meeting planned for later in the week involving the owner of Faraway Tree Kindergarten, the Pavilion Caretaker and himself.

Village Hall

Cllr B O'Neill reported that the Village Hall continues to be subject to Covid lockdown restrictions and outlined the maintenance work that was planned and had been undertaken. He also highlighted that a 'Carbon Neutral Project' was being put together with a view to qualifying for a 90% grant from Biffa which comprised of:

- insulating the back roof;
- installing Solar Panels on the lower roof level;
- providing an efficient water heating system especially for the Green Room kitchen;
- installing Electric Vehicle charging points in the car park; and
- providing a bicycle rack in the car park.

In addition, Cllr B O'Neill reported that the Village Hall had been offered as a Covid vaccination site but the offer had not been taken up and an annual saving of £900 had been made by switching to a different insurance provider.

In relation to the Electric Vehicle charging points, it was clarified that this project was a trial being managed by Herts County Council and the specific detail about how the charging points would operate had not been identified as yet. In addition, it was noted that the suggestion would be made that charging points could also be installed at the Recreation Ground car park and at the Green Tye Mission Hall.

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

Bus Shelter Refurbishment Project

Cllr S Smith provided an update on the Bus Shelter Refurbishment Project. Whilst quotes had been received last year for this work, those quoting had subsequently indicated that they were not interested in undertaking the work.

Consequently, quotes from builders willing to do the work have been sought with each applicant being supplied an outline requirements specification. 5 quotes have been received ranging from £6,400 to £15,000. Additional information is being sought, via a detailed questionnaire, as well as references. Once received, quotes will be ranked according to cost, value for money and adherence to requirements and standards so that a recommendation can be made to the April Parish Council meeting.

Note – a local resident was thanked for his help with this project.

General

Cllr S Smith commented that the first half of last month saw the ‘Beast from the East’ with very cold temperatures and a good coating of snow. Since then, temperatures have risen and, most importantly, the ground has dried out to make conditions underfoot more acceptable to those taking exercise in the countryside.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- impact of rains and flood – Herts County Council have secured additional funds to tackle those footpaths and bridleways worst hit from the weather and heavy usage by walkers or horse riders. Although a list is still being compiled, Footpaths 24, 37, 38 and 51 had already been identified as requiring attention;
- safety – Footpaths 18, 19, 20 and 21 (those in the Winding Hill, Holdens and Church Lane triangle) are being assessed for safety and the need for either supporting railings or steps where the slope is very steep;
- tree blockage – very large tree blocking Footpath 7 had been cleared by Chaldean Estate; and
- Footpath 22 (St Andrew’s School) – the previous diversion order proposed an alternative well-used but undefined footpath. The public enquiry denied the proposal as a diversion cannot be made to an existing path. Herts County Council are investigating the creation of a new route by the side of the former Barns School to link Tower Hill to Oudle Lane.

The Chair commented that rubbish on footpaths was a nation-wide issue and suggested that volunteer working party should be established, independent of the Parish Council, to tackle this. In addition, such a working party could take on other projects such as the planters. It was noted that 3 bags of rubbish had been cleared from Footpath 37 (Danebridge Lane) recently by local residents.

(iii) Highways

The Chair reported that a meeting had taken place on 26th February with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) and Highways. It was noted that Covid was causing delays in actions being taken and that it was important to maintain the existing good working relationship. The key points from that meeting were:

- signage at Danebridge – aiming to design a new single sign to include the existing one-way system warning , plus warnings to heavy goods vehicles, flooded road and ford;
- Kettle Green Lane passing places – still waiting on the quote from Ringway for the passing places but the Lane will be surfaced-dressed in mid-March;
- drains and gullies – many reports have been made on this topic and one drain opposite the Fire Station had been marked with a cone to prevent cars parking over it as this prevents it being cleared. Additional funding has been earmarked for clearance work. Clearing the top of grates is encouraged but removing drain covers to clear out a drain is not to be undertaken due to health and safety issues;
- bollards – the plastic, bendy bollards will be installed at Broadfield Way traffic calming;
- triangle at St Thomas' – works have been delayed due to the requirement to undertake safety checks relating to the main gas line there; and
- double yellow lines at Hadham Cross – no progress on these.

Cllr S Smith reported that Herts County Council would be clearing the stones and debris from Watery Lane now that the water level had receded. In addition, he has requested that similar work is undertaken in Oudle Lane and Danebridge Road as well as reinstating the road edges where the definition has been lost.

Cllr S Smith also stated that the damage to Dane Bridge on the B1004 had been reported. Warning cones had been placed in the area and Herts County Council will undertake the repair at some point.

Cllr B O'Neill reported that several potholes in Green Tye and Perry Green are being dealt with. In terms of the street lighting project, following an inspection by Ringway, he stated that the work will commence in May subject to co-ordinating with UK Power Networks. In addition, it was noted that none of the surplus parish Heritage lighting columns had been purchased.

With reference to drainage problems, Cllr B O'Neill commented that Herts County Council will be pressed for the flooding hotspots to be investigated properly and sorted out.

(iv) Media

None.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that the Neighbourhood Plan had been submitted to East Herts Council on 9th February and the website had been updated to include all the submission documents. East Herts had confirmed that all relevant legislation and legal requirements had been met, and advised that the public consultation would start on 11th March for a period of 7 weeks. Once the consultation concludes, the Independent Examination will take place. The appointment of the Examiner is made jointly between the Parish Council and East Herts Council.

(vi) Security

In Cllr Mrs H Maduhu's absence, the Clerk reported that PCSO Leon de Bruyn had provided the following information:

- no crimes had been reported in Much Hadham during February; and
- several rural operations had been conducted focussing on hare coursing, poaching and off-road scrambler bikes in addition to patrols for Covid breaches.

In addition, the Clerk reported that quarterly meetings between the local police team and local Parish Clerks were being established. These meetings would aim to share incentives, ideas and discuss any issues arising with the first meeting being planned for the end of March.

(vii) Other

The Chair stated that the Annual Village meeting was booked to take place on 18th May but not yet clear whether it would be virtual or in person, or what format it would take.

21/44. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Both Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) and Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) were not present and had given their apologies for this meeting.

On behalf of Cllr I Devonshire (EHC), the Chair read his report which provided the background reasoning to why a charge for garden waste had been introduced from 1st April. In essence, East Herts Council had sought to balance its budget without cutting service provision and garden waste collection is not a statutory function. Most local authorities around the country already charge for this service and have not noticed any increase in fly tipping. The charge is £45 if sign up before the 1st April, £49 if not.

21/45. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Drainage

Residents highlighted that some drainage repair works, from Cox Lane stream down to Church Lane, had been organised and paid for by a local resident. Cllrs were supported in their efforts to pursue resolution of this matter.

Cllr B O'Neil highlighted that he had asked Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) to clarify why street sweeping is not undertaken in Much Hadham as that could help keep drains and gullies clearer.

21/46. VILLAGE SIGN

Cllr D McDonald explained the basis and analysis of the quotes received to repair the Village Sign. The quotes being considered are:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Bakers of Danbury | £1,870 + VAT |
| • Sign of the Times | £2,720 + VAT |
| • Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd: | |
| ○ If strip down to metal | £3,909 + VAT |
| ○ If not stripped down to metal | £2,851 + VAT |

Cllr D McDonald recommended that the quote from Sign of the Times should be accepted based on the evidence provided which demonstrates that they have specialist expertise in metal village signs.

Following discussion, it was agreed to defer the decision until the April meeting. Various issues had been raised therefore it was agreed that follow up questions should be asked to determine:

- the standard of paints being used;
- an estimate on how long the repair would last; and
- whether any warranties are provided.

21/47. TREE MANAGEMENT

The Chair highlighted that only 2 quotes had been received for the work prioritised as needing to be undertaken within 3 months in the tree management plan.

RESOLVED to delegate authority to the Chair, Cllr Mrs J Liversage, Cllr K Twort, in conjunction with the Clerk, to consider and approve the contractor to undertake the tree work prioritised as within 3 months in the tree management plan. This decision would be ratified at the April meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that the decision could be made via email.

21/48. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - MARCH 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP21	GovResources Ltd	Neighbourhood Plan support (NP)	1,350.00
OP22	MH Village Hall	Buildings insurance	494.43
OP23	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (February)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (March)	334.00
OP24	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (March)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£2,855.56</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting. It was noted that the process for online payments was straightforward.

(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.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 2 MARCH 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2020	43,057.54	18,742.76	61,800.30
Income	79,252.08	8,082.00	87,334.08
Expenditure	- 35,820.43	- 2,570.22	- 38,390.65
Closing balance	<u>86,489.19</u>	<u>24,254.54</u>	<u>110,743.73</u>

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

(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation (£3,000 of this awarded to the Tennis Club December 2020)	4,570.00
(2) Streetlights	5,000.00
(3) Open spaces	3,650.00
	<u>13,220.00</u>

The Clerk highlighted that this month's statement shows that 50% of the budget remains unspent although a clearer picture would be available at the end of the month once final expenditure items for the current financial year were paid.

The Clerk stated that the underspending resulted primarily from projects not being completed during the year and better value for money being obtained in some areas.

In terms of projects, she highlighted that a number of projects had not progressed. Some projects are clearly detailed on the financial statement (roller shutter at the Pavilion (£2,000), the bollards at Moor Place Gate (£800) and the street lighting replacement programme (£6,100)) whilst others are within headings, mainly "open spaces". The majority of the "open spaces" underspend relates to tree maintenance (£11,000 once the plan is paid for) but this budget included funds to cover signage, litter bin replacements and planters.

The Clerk explained why a number of budget headings were underspent, specifically:

- insurance - underspent by £1,400 as insurers had changed and significantly better deals had been obtained;
- administration costs - underspent as a result of Covid in terms of hall hire (Zoom licence significantly less than hall hire), stationery, travel and training costs had been lower due to virtual training;
- war memorial – budget included £400 for clearing the moss which had not been undertaken although it was noted that potentially a proper review should be undertaken to be clear on the work required for the ground around the memorial as well as the memorial itself where specialist contractors may be required;
- grants and donations (£137 expenditure) - no organisation had sought a grant or donation leading to an underspend of £1,000; and
- VAT – this item was underspent however the budget for VAT income and expenditure was set at the same amount so that it had no impact on setting the budget and differences arise as result of the timing of when the VAT is reclaimed.

In addition, the Clerk highlighted that whilst a sports grant to the Tennis Club had been approved – double the sum set aside in the budget from Section 106 monies – this had not been paid as yet.

Finally, the Clerk stated that given that the street lighting project, tree management and some other open spaces projects fell into the next financial year, it would be prudent to set aside funds from this year (£6,100 for street lighting and £15,000 for open spaces) although this should be revisited once the financial year ends.

In response to a question, the Clerk clarified that some investigations were in progress relating to the Village Hall bins in order to determine the cost.

21/49. BURIAL AUTHORITY

Deferred until the next meeting.

21/50. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/51. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- reminder that the first digital Census would be taking place on the 21st March and all households should be receiving their letters soon;
- the A120 bypass continues to progress and the latest newsletter would be circulated; and
- the installation date for the play equipment was the 20th April and it would take a couple of days.

21/52. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 30th March 2021 to approve the remaining expenditure relating to the financial year and risk assessments and the next full Parish Council meeting will be Tuesday 6th April 2021. Both meetings will start at 7:30 pm and arrangements to be confirmed but likely to be in the same format as tonight.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:54 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 2 MARCH 2021

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2021	DATE	
	BUDGET	2021	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	43,000.00	43,000.00	
Litter Agency	4,235.00	4,272.66	
New Homes Bonus	10,000.00	15,389.00	
Pavilion income	1,000.00	3,900.00	Budget did not include the income from Faraway Tree Kindergarten
Grant	300.00	297.00	
Other	60.00	11.66	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	12,381.76	Reclaim for 2018/19 + 2019/20
TOTAL INCOME	63,595.00	79,252.08	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,000.00	7,165.56	
PWLB loan repayment	5,387.46	5,387.46	
Administration costs	3,300.00	2,016.03	
Insurance	3,900.00	2,500.43	New insurers whose premiums are significantly lower than expected
Audit fees	730.00	445.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	21,800.00	4,455.48	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	4,008.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,100.00	687.40	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Street lighting (replacement programme)	6,100.00	-	
Pavilion	3,400.00	3,371.30	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	-	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	1,500.00	-	
Neighbourhood Plan	2,000.00	3,834.27	
Capital - Roller shutter at Pavilion	2,000.00	-	
Capital - Bollards at Moor Place Gate	800.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	1,914.50	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	71,060.46	35,820.43	