

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council virtual meeting held on Tuesday, 6th April 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 3 members of the public.

21/58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr D McDonald.

21/59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

21/60. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/61. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

On behalf of Trustees, the Chair announced that there is a vacant almshouse. This is being advertised in the Parish Magazine and on noticeboards, with details of who to contact. The deadline for applications is 14th May.

The Chair also highlighted that the Annual Village meeting was scheduled to take place in the Village Hall on 18th May. However, due to existing restrictions and, although still feasible to hold the meeting in person, it was proposed that this Annual Village meeting take place via Zoom prior to the Parish Council's Annual meeting on 4th May, prior to the legislation enabling virtual meetings ending on the 7th May. This was agreed with the start time for the Annual Village meeting being 7 pm and the indicative start time for the Annual Parish Council meeting being 7:45 pm.

21/62. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 30th March 2021 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting. The Chair highlighted that this meeting had reviewed the risk assessment and approved some financial payments.

21/63. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair commented that whilst the report on outstanding matters had not been circulated, nothing new had been added to the document and all other matters would be covered by subsequent agenda items.

21/64. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Playground

The latest playground inspection report was noted. Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve the quote to repair the Woodland Cottage (low risk) for £315 + VAT. This quote was from Broadmead Leisure Limited.

Recreation Ground

The Chair reported that in light of the comments received regarding the use of the car park, rubbish being left etc, a Focus Group meeting had been held on Tuesday, 30th March, involving PCSO Leon de Bruyn, Cllr D McDonald, a Sports Association representative and herself. The initial conclusion from this Group was that the gates to the Recreation Ground should be locked from 8pm to 8am, unless there is a reason not to be. This would reduce access by cars although it was noted that this would not prevent access by pedestrians. To facilitate this, investigations into how the gate could be locked would be undertaken.

In addition, the Group suggested that the number of bins on the site should be increased: 2 more rubbish bins and 1 more dog bin. The indicative cost for this would be:

- 2 x £360 + VAT to obtain two rubbish bins that are similar to that already installed on the site; and
- £155 + VAT and delivery for a dog bin similar to those purchased previously.

The proposed locations for these bins were:

- rubbish and dog bins by the Bowls Club; and
- rubbish bin the other side of the Pavilion.

Note – it is accepted that any proposal would need to be discussed and agreed with the Sports Association.

In discussion, it was noted that dog owners need to be encouraged to be responsible for their dogs and any mess they make. It was also highlighted that in addition to purchasing the bins, the litter picking cost was unlikely to increase but the dog bin emptying cost would increase by £131 + VAT per year.

Following discussion, the proposal to purchase 2 rubbish bins and 1 dog bin for less than £1,000 + VAT + delivery was agreed.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton reported that maintenance work had been carried out on the bench and it had been moved to the bus stop. It was noted that some of the Parish Council's assets by the Hall – the rubbish bins and noticeboards – needed maintenance work. In addition, as reported in the Parish Magazine, some decorating and minor repairs have been undertaken within the Hall during lockdown in advance of users returning once lockdown restrictions ease.

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton also highlighted that the Village Hall had obtained a quote for re-roofing and improving insulation on the “outbuildings”, with other quotes being sought before a grant application is made. Finally, she reported that the Village Hall had expressed its interest with Herts County Council for hosting one or more electric vehicle charging points.

The Clerk, in her role as Treasurer for the Village Hall, highlighted that the position regarding waste had been partially resolved. An agreement had been reached with East Herts Waste on the costs since July 2020 which are shared between the Village Hall and the Parish Council. The volume of waste overall still needs to be clarified but the key to unlock the second bin is now held locally.

Finally, the Clerk highlighted that the Village Hall's AGM will be held on 20th April at 8 pm.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that there had been big changes in the weather picture for the last 4 weeks, but the dominating dry spell had meant that virtually all footpaths and bridleways had recovered their firmness allowing many residents to take their lockdown exercise outdoors.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- bridge on footpath23 where it crosses the River Ash at Two Bridges: this had been damaged, probably when clearing shrubs and trees from the river bank, but not considered a present danger to the public when investigated by Herts County Council. However, the temporary repair to the adjoining fence, using barb wire, could pose a problem for dogs or children;
- COVID grant: Herts County Council have been allocated a COVID grant to re-instate footpaths and bridleways that have been severely damaged by the constant rain and resulting floods earlier in the year. The Parish Council has an opportunity to indicate the areas requiring re-instatement.

In response to a question, Cllr S Smith confirmed that the steps/handrails for the steep parts of Footpaths 18|19|20|21 are already in hand as a health and safety issue.

In discussion, it was noted that there had been an issue along Coxs Lane where a horse had been spooked by a tent pitched near to the bridleway. This is a matter for the landowner since it was not on the bridleway.

The Chair highlighted that the holly tree behind the Red Lion bus shelter may still be an issue in the future, as only a branch had been cut off as opposed to the tree being cut down.

(iii) Highways

Cllr S Smith reported that the clearance of stones from Watery Lane and the redefinition of the roadside in Danebridge Road was still outstanding. In addition, the repair to Danebridge itself, as it had been hit again, was also outstanding.

The Chair reported that the potholes in Kettle Green Lane had been filled but this was in advance of the surface top dressing and nothing to do with the s106 improvements to the passing lanes matter which are still outstanding.

(iv) Media

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that the Parish Council Facebook page had reached 141 views this week and over the last month in relation to posts supporting East Herts Food Waste Reduction Campaign.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the message regarding dogs on leads on the Recreation Ground would be reposted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, including a reminder to be a responsible dog owner.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that East Herts Council's consultation is still underway and this has been advertised through posters and emails to those subscribed to Neighbourhood Plan update emails.

(vi) Security

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that PCSO Leon de Bruyn had provided the following crime information:

- a digger had been stolen from a location in Much Hadham after it had been delivered and enquiries are still in progress;
- criminal damage reported to the concrete floor at the Recreation Ground after a bench was moved. This case has been closed with no suspects being identified; and
- two recent cases of theft and vandalism in the garden of a house in Perry Green. The second incident happened in the final week of March and resulted in significant damage to property.

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu commented that matters relating to the Recreation Ground had been covered earlier. (Minute ref: 21/64 (i))

The Clerk reported that the first quarterly liaison meeting between the police team and the parish clerks for the local area had taken place, on 31st March. The meeting covered crime rates, the importance of reporting on ECHO, how the police are working more closely with East Herts Council in relation to fly-tipping and the type of work they have been undertaking: speed checks (an ECHO priority); vehicle stop and checks (caught a van load of stolen catalytic converters) and getting to know the local back tracks using quad bikes or ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) as the 2 Police Constables are new to the team.

Finally, the Clerk highlighted that a local WhatsApp group was being established to enable messages to be passed around the local area quicker. Membership to be Clerks plus a Cllr. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs H Maduhu would be Much Hadham's nominated Cllr.

(vii) Other

None.

It was noted that the position regarding the tree works would be reported at the next meeting.

21/65. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

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

- garden waste bins – more than 23,000 households had signed up for the paid service, essentially 40% of households and more than anticipated;
- Hertford Theatre – planning permission to renovate/almost rebuild the theatre had been received. The Theatre will close 7th June with construction starting after that;
- Old River Lane project, Bishop's Stortford – this project has been scaled back significantly due to financial constraints, now half the original cost. The auditorium will be smaller in size;
- Neighbourhood Plan consultation – progressing well with no problems being identified so far; and
- Electric charging points – whilst not his area, it is believed that the points will be installed for free.

21/66. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Street light

A resident highlighted that a street light is on night and day behind the school. Cllr B O'Neill commented that this is known about and it is a street light that is being removed as part of the parish lighting project.

(ii) Village sign

In response to a resident's question, the Clerk confirmed that the original Village sign had cost £2,475. In addition, she confirmed that the original artist that had made the sign was no longer alive.

21/67. VILLAGE SIGN

The Chair reminded those present that the quotes had been considered at the last meeting where some questions had been raised. Additional information to answer these questions had been received and circulated to all Cllrs.

RESOLVED to approve Contractor B for the repair of the Village Sign for £2,720 + VAT.
Contractor B is Sign of the Times.

21/68. BUS SHELTERS

Cllr S Smith provided the background to the bus shelters project and the quotes received, as outlined in the report circulated to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. Based on the assessment work that he had undertaken, in conjunction with the support of a knowledgeable resident, Cllr S Smith recommended that the contract should be awarded to Contractor B. He also highlighted that Contractor B would not be able to start the work until August 2021 but it was considered that the bus shelters were unlikely to deteriorate significantly before then.

RESOLVED to approve contractor B for the repair of the bus shelters for £8,976 + VAT, inclusive of a contingency of £1,542 + VAT.

Contractor B is Gooch Carpentry.

The Chair thanked Cllr S Smith for his work on this project and it was agreed that she would write to the resident involved to thank him for his assistance in this matter.

21/69. PAVILION

The Chair outlined that the purpose to the motion detailed on the agenda regarding approving, in principle, to extend the agreement with Faraway Tree Kindergarten Ltd for a further year was to provide some reassurance to the Kindergarten that the agreement could be continued. As stated in the proposed motion, this was subject to agreeing terms and conditions.

Cllr B O'Neill queried why the agreement did not run for a longer period and it was noted that this was something that could be discussed.

RESOLVED to approve, in principle, entering into an agreement with Faraway Tree Kindergarten Ltd for the use of the pavilion for a further period of 12 months to commence on expiry of the current agreement on 5 October 2021 on the same terms as to remuneration as the present agreement (£780 per month), subject to agreement on terms and the approval of Much Hadham Sports Association.

The Chair commented that Cllr D McDonald would contact the Kindergarten regarding this decision.

21/70. GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

The Clerk outlined the background and purpose to the proposed Health and Safety Policy, highlighting that it was an action from the Parish Council's Risk Register that was approved on 30th March.

RESOLVED to approve the draft Health and Safety Policy.

21/71. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP36	HATPC	Subscription 2021/22	809.87
OP37	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (March)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (April)	334.00
OP38	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (April)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£1,821.00</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr S Smith.

(ii) Financial Statement

The Clerk highlighted that the financial statement information would be reported by year: 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2019/20.

2020/21 – financial year just ended

The final financial statement for 2020/21 was received. The summary financial position is detailed below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix A.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION - FINAL

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2020	43,057.54	18,742.76	61,800.30
Income	80,032.09	9,292.00	89,324.09
Expenditure	- 41,960.25	- 3,290.47	- 45,250.72
Closing balance	<u>81,129.38</u>	<u>24,744.29</u>	<u>105,873.67</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 statement is effectively the year end position – the only difference between this information and the draft Financial Accounts which will be presented to the May meeting is £18 of bank charges debited on 31st March.

In addition, the Clerk reminded those present that she had outlined at the meeting on 2nd March, the reasons why the budget for this financial year had not been spent. A number of reasons had related to achieving better value for money and the impact of COVID. There had been two areas where it had been recommended that it would be prudent to earmark funds to ensure completion of projects – open space items (£15,000) and street lighting (£6,100).

It was agreed to earmark the sums recommended by the Clerk.

2021/22 – new financial year

The financial statement for 2021/22 to date was received. The summary financial position is detailed below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix B. There were no matters to highlight.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 6 APRIL 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,129.38	24,744.29	105,873.67
Income	-	-	-
Expenditure	- 3,930.10	-	- 3,930.10
Closing balance	<u>77,199.28</u>	<u>24,744.29</u>	<u>101,943.57</u>
Total Fund Balances			<u>101,943.57</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>

Note – earmarked sums will be updated in the next report to reflect the above decision regarding open spaces and street lighting.

2019/20 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The Clerk reported that the external audit for 2019/20 had been completed and the Audited AGAR had been published on the noticeboards and Parish Council's website on 25th March 2021. [<https://www.muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk/parish-council/accounts/>]

The AGAR had been qualified as a result of the late submission of the return, but she had queried an element of the qualification with the response only being recently received.

The Clerk stated that providing the 2020/21 AGAR is submitted in accordance with the timescales, and the question relating to elector rights on the annual governance statement is answered 'no', the 2020/21 AGAR will not be qualified. She also highlighted that work is in progress to ensure that the 2020/21 AGAR will be submitted for approval at the May meeting. The work referred to being:

- 2020/21 draft AGAR – annual governance statement and annual accounting statement completed subject to Internal Audit review;
- the Financial Accounts – these have been prepared as flow from the regular monthly reports received at each Parish Council meeting;
- Internal Audit review – this review is currently in progress and the report is expected mid-April; and
- review of effectiveness of internal controls – to be completed once Internal Audit report received and underpins the annual governance statement in the AGAR.

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the Chair's signature will be required after the May meeting and the submission deadline is 30th June.

21/72. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/73. BURIAL AUTHORITY

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 2nd February 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/74. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/75. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- Boundary review – reminder that this review is in progress and background details on the review and timescales had been circulated to Cllrs in March;
- Local government reorganisation – should the next steps be taken, the Parish Council will need to have considered the impact this could have locally. HAPTC are undertaking work on this which will be circulated to facilitate discussion; and
- A120 bypass – the latest newsletter has been received and will be placed on the website. The project continues to progress well.

21/76. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 4th May 2021 at approximately 7:45 pm as it will follow the Annual Village meeting. The meeting will be in the same format as tonight.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:58 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON - FINAL

(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	4,680.00	Budget did not include the income from Faraway Tree Kindergarten
Grant	300.00	297.00	
Other	60.00	11.67	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	12,381.76	Reclaim for 2018/19 + 2019/20
TOTAL INCOME	63,595.00	80,032.09	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,000.00	7,165.56	
PWLB loan repayment	5,387.46	5,387.46	
Administration costs	3,300.00	2,157.74	
Insurance	3,900.00	2,500.43	New insurers whose premiums are significantly lower than expected
Audit fees	730.00	785.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	21,800.00	6,582.37	
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	2,251.39	
Street lighting (replacement programme)	6,100.00	-	
Pavilion	3,400.00	3,724.42	
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	2,841.21	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	71,060.46	41,960.25	

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 6 APRIL 2021

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2022	DATE	
	BUDGET	2022	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00	-	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	-	
New Homes Bonus	9,097.00	-	
Pavilion income	7,020.00	-	
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	-	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	-	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	-	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	597.13	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	-	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,768.00	-	
Administration costs	3,100.00	809.87	
Insurance	3,250.00	722.25	
Audit fees	830.00	-	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	-	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,400.00	-	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	334.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	-	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	80.00	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	-	
Neighbourhood Plan	-	-	
Revenue - Maintenance of Village sign	4,000.00	-	
Revenue - Maintenance of bus shelters	8,000.00	-	
Capital - Playground equipment	8,000.00	1,155.71	
VAT	5,000.00	231.14	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	3,930.10	