

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council virtual Annual meeting held on Tuesday, 4th May 2021 at 8:06 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 4 members of the public.

21/77. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr I Hunt thanked Cllr Mrs P Taylor for her hard work and leadership as Chair over the course of a difficult year, noting that momentum had been made on a number of items, as reported in the preceding Annual Parish/Village meeting.

RESOLVED that Cllr Mrs P Taylor be duly elected to the office of Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year.

21/78. DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Cllr Mrs P Taylor confirmed that she would sign her declaration of office with the Clerk after the meeting.

21/79. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED that Cllr I Hunt be duly elected as Vice Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing civic year.

21/80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

21/81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 21/92 (i)) and would therefore not be participating in nor voting on the related motion.

No other declarations were made or applications for dispensations sought.

21/82. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/83. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked those who had just attended the Annual Village/Parish meeting where the main activities and achievements of the Parish Council over the last year had been highlighted. In addition, she reflected on the fact that the Parish Council had a full complement of Cllrs and thanked them for re-electing her as Chair.

The Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt, Vice-Chair for his support and expertise, especially during her absence for a number of months in 2020. The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer was also thanked for producing an excellent set of accounts for 2020/21.

Those present were reminded that Parish Council meetings would no longer be held virtually after the 7th May so future meetings will be back in the usual venues. Further information on any precautions required will be made available in due course.

Finally, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) was congratulated on being voted in as Vice-Chair of East Herts Council.

21/84. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th April 2021 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

21/85. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair stated that the report on outstanding matters would be updated and circulated for next month's meeting.

21/86. PORTFOLIOS, COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair reported that following consultation with Cllrs, proposals for the allocation of portfolios had been circulated prior to the meeting. RESOLVED to approve the allocation of portfolios, detailed in Appendix A.

RESOLVED to approve the membership of Committees, including designation of Committee Chair, as follows:

- Planning Committee: Cllrs I Hunt (Chair); D McDonald; B O'Neill; S Smith and K Twort;
- Burial Authority: Cllrs Mrs K Hamilton; Mrs J Liversage; B O'Neill; Mrs P Taylor (Chair) and K Twort;

- Staffing Committee: Cllrs Mrs J Liversage; Mrs P Taylor (Chair) and S Smith;
- Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group: Cllrs I Hunt (Chair) and B O'Neill. In addition, resident members: M Adams; M Byrne; N Clarke; K Howlett; H Labram and C Thompson.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council would be represented on other bodies as follows:

- Much Hadham Sports Association: Cllrs D McDonald and K Twort; and
- Much Hadham Village Hall: Cllrs Mrs K Hamilton and B O'Neill.

The Chair commented that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was nearly at the end of its task and expressed gratitude for the hard work and commitment of its members to such an important project for the parish.

21/87. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllr K Twort commented that not much had happened since the last meeting.

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that the new playground equipment had been installed with the Heras fencing still in place. The Chair thanked Cllr Mrs J Liversage for her hard work.

The Clerk reported that the ROSPA inspection had been booked and would be undertaken during June/July with the report expected for the August/September meeting. In addition, she reported that the swing seat had been replaced on 29th April and repairs to the Woodland Cottage would be undertaken in the coming weeks.

Cllr D McDonald stated that more anti-social behaviour had taken place on the Bowling Green and this had been reported to the police.

The Chair highlighted that the fence in the top left hand corner had been breached with the allotment area being accessed. Some damage had occurred as a tree had been dumped into the ditch. It was noted that the fence was in poor condition and Cllrs K Twort and D McDonald agreed to investigate.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton stated that the Village Hall Management Committee Chair had given his report to the preceding Annual Parish/Village meeting.

Cllr B O'Neil reported that a meeting had been recently held to begin preparing for the BIFFA grant application process. A representative of the Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall had

joined this meeting and had provided a number of fundraising ideas, although it was accepted that the Much Hadham Hall was much smaller.

The Clerk is still waiting to speak to the litter picker regarding the volume of waste in the Village Hall bins.

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

The Chair reminded Cllrs that as Cllr S Smith was the only Cllr involved with the Environment portfolio, they may need to offer support if any other issues materialised.

General

Cllr S Smith commented that the improved weather has helped people to enjoy fresh air and walks in the countryside.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- first of two annual trim programmes for selected footpaths and bridleways begins on 14th May and will last for 6 weeks;
- bridge repairs:
 - bridge that crosses the Parish boundary into High Wych, near Old Park Farm on Footpath 44 needs repair and has been closed to access. The supports for the treads appear rotten so this will not be a simple re-decking job;
 - bridge crossing the River Ash at the end of Footpath 20 has had barrier tape installed and an emergency 21 day closure notice applied. Contractors have repaired the safety fence/wing wall on the church side which was impeded as the materials for the old fence were stolen. A warning notice has been placed at the beginning of this footpath, at the church entrance, to stop unwanted journeys; and
 - bridge closest to the Widford Road on Footpath 29 has a number of treads that need replacing. The bridge is currently not closed and will be inspected soon to determine the work required;
- railings repaired on Footpath 20 on the other side of the bridge where it rises steeply up towards the Holdens. Potentially, Herts County Council's COVID-19 Project funds will be used to install steps here and also for repairs to the railings and general state of Footpath 18, which suffered the most from the floods and muddy conditions in the first two months of this year;
- repairs made to the ramp on Footpath 14 where the path leaves Blackbridge Lane and a waymark post replaced at the junction of Footpaths 14 and 53;
- other repairs made to the ramp on Footpath 25 at Oudle Lane and to the steps on Footpath 33 near the golf course and lake;
- gates repaired on Footpath 24 opposite Little Hill House and at Hill Farm;

- diversion order for Footpath 11 at Kettle Green Lane has finally been made and the next step is the consultation; and
- meeting has been arranged for 11 am, 12th May with the owner of Moor Place, his business secretary and HCC representative to discuss the owner's concerns regarding Footpath 10 where it crosses his land, his views regarding dogs and his need for privacy and protection of his property. The Chair will also attend this meeting.

(iii) Highways

Cllr S Smith reported that no progress had been made on clearing the stones from Watery Lane, redefining the roadside in Danebridge Road or repairing the number of potholes in the vicinity. However, repairs to Danebridge itself had started and the trees in Ash Meadow were currently being pollarded.

Cllr B O'Neill reported that work had commenced on the streetlights. Although Ringway were waiting for the new lanterns to arrive, enabling works were in progress and a number of columns had been removed to his garden, including 4 lanterns. These will be advertised for sale in the Parish Magazine once polished.

(iv) Media

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that the Parish Council Facebook page had an additional 8 followers and 141 unique visitors for April, with the majority of engagement from the post regarding the closure of Footpath 20.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that he and a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had met on site with the owners and developers of the Land at Barn School on 19th April, with notes of the meeting being circulated subsequently. The new owners were well aware of the District Plan and the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan, and of the limitations of and opportunities for the site. The possibility was raised that site layout plans would be consulted upon.

(vi) Security

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

- a container on business premises in Trimms Green was broken into and an off-road scrambler bike removed;
- report made of a male exiting and entering a car whilst passing through the village wearing no clothes on the bottom half of his body; and
- business premises in Green Tye were broken into and 2 boxes of fruit stolen.

In addition, Cllr Mrs H Maduhu highlighted, from OWL reports that various scams continue and appear to be increasing in sophistication. Hertfordshire Constabulary is warning residents to remain vigilant following reports of scam phone calls and text messages which appeared to be from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and from genuine Hertfordshire Constabulary spoofed numbers. Advice is to terminate the cold call immediately and report on 101 immediately.

Finally, Cllr Mrs H Maduhu raised awareness of a malicious piece of spyware – known as FluBot – which is affecting Android phones and devices across the UK. The spyware is installed when a victim receives a text message, asking them to install a tracking app due to a ‘missed package delivery’. The tracking app is spyware that steals passwords and other sensitive data. It will also access contact details and send out additional text messages – further spreading the spyware.

(vii) Other

Tree work

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the tree work was in progress. The last update from the contractor was that he was waiting for the approvals from East Herts Council.

21/88. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) and Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) both provided their reports to the earlier Much Hadham Annual Parish/Village Meeting which had preceded this Annual Parish Council meeting.

21/89. RESIDENTS’ COMMENTS

(i) Barn School site within the Neighbourhood Plan

In response to a question regarding how the Barn School site was covered with the Neighbourhood Plan, Cllr I Hunt explained that policies had been included for this specific site given that, at the time the Plan was drafted, there was a possibility that the site could be developed. In addition, he stated that it was not a site allocation as the site had not come forward in the call for sites. The policies cover such things as priority views, public footpaths and so on.

(ii) Overgrown hedges on footpaths

A resident highlighted that there were a number of places within the parish where footpaths are reduced/obstructed by overgrown hedges and asked whether the Parish Council could do something about this. Cllr I Hunt confirmed that a standard letter had been developed in the past for this type of situation which would be provided to the Clerk to use.

The resident agreed to provide the specific details of properties to the Clerk where this was an issue.

21/90. INTERNAL CONTROLS

The Clerk highlighted that the Internal Audit report, Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and the effectiveness review were available on the Parish Council's website. [Website: <http://www.muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk/parish-council/accounts/>]

(i) Internal Audit

The Clerk highlighted that the annual Internal Audit review had been completed for the last financial year, 2020/21, and the conclusion was that the Parish Council had the expected controls in place and no recommendations were made. Page 3 of the AGAR 2020/21, completed by Internal Audit, and the supporting detailed report were noted.

(ii) Review of effectiveness

The Clerk reported that the effectiveness of the internal controls in place from April 2020 to March 2021 had been reviewed. The late submission of the 2019/20 AGAR had resulted in one issue – item 4 – being assessed as not in place as the Accounts and Audit Regulations were not complied with in terms of the public inspection of the accounts and the AGAR publication requirements. Approval and publication of the AGAR for 2020/21 – the next agenda item – would result in this issue being rectified. No other issues had been identified. This review underpins the Annual Governance Statement for the last financial year which is part of the next agenda item.

Cllr I Hunt provided assurance that the assessment reflected the Parish Council's internal controls.

RESOLVED to approve the review of effectiveness of internal controls for 2020/21.

21/91. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) AND ACCOUNTS

The Clerk highlighted that the unapproved, subject to external audit, AGAR and detailed financial accounts were available on the Parish Council's website. [Website: <http://www.muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk/parish-council/accounts/>]

(i) Annual Governance Statement

The Clerk highlighted that the Annual Governance Statement reflects that the Parish Council has a system of internal control in place, apart from item 4, as reflected by the review of effectiveness approved under item 21/90(ii). Item 4 had been explained as part of the previous agenda item and had been detailed on the form itself. The Clerk reiterated that this

aspect of internal control would be rectified once the 2020/21 AGAR was approved and published.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21, Section 1 in the AGAR.

(ii) Accounting Statements and year on year comparison

The Clerk highlighted that there are two versions of the annual accounts. A very summarised version is documented in the AGAR, Section 2, which is supported by the detailed Financial Accounts. She referred to the report that had accompanied these documents which had provided details, primarily, on how this related to the financial information received at each monthly meeting during the year.

In addition, to support the understanding of this financial information, there is a year on year comparison, related to both formats of the accounts, that explains significant movements, which was noted. The version relating to the AGAR is submitted to the external auditor.

RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements, Section 2 in the AGAR and the detailed Financial Accounts for 2020/21.

(iii) Period for the exercise of public rights

The Clerk stated that the period for the exercise of public rights would be Thursday 3rd June to Wednesday 14th July. In addition, she explained that during this time, local electors can inspect the supporting accounting records and ask questions as well as raise an objection with the external auditor – PKF Littlejohn. Full details of the rights of a local elector are available on the website.

This information was noted.

21/92. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the payment for grass cutting at the Recreation Ground was for the year and essentially being paid in advance.

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown overleaf, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not participate in this item or vote due to his declared interest. (Minute ref: 21/81)

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - MAY 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP39	EMC Contracts Ltd	Electrical repairs at Pavilion	324.00
OP40	BA ICCM	Membership fee relating to cemetery management	95.00
OP41	MH Sports Association	Grass cutting at Recreation Ground	1,500.00
OP42	Ian Hunt	Zoom for virtual meetings	107.90
OP43	Sovereign	80% balance for new play equipment	5,307.38
OP44	BA Brace Turner Ltd	Grounds maintenance at Perry Green Burial Ground	360.00
OP45	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	179.50
OP46	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (April)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (May)	334.00
DD	PWLB	Loan repayment	2,693.73
OP47	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (May)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£11,578.64</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr S Smith and Cllr K Twort.

(ii) Financial Statement

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.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 4 MAY 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,111.38	24,744.29	105,855.67
Income	780.01	-	780.01
Expenditure	- 15,113.74	- 395.00	- 15,508.74
Closing balance	<u>66,777.65</u>	<u>24,349.29</u>	<u>91,126.94</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	11,100.00
(3) Open spaces	18,650.00
	<u>34,320.00</u>

The Clerk highlighted that since the financial statement had been issued, the first half of the precept (£21,000) for the year had been received as well as the VAT reclaim relating to the last financial year (£2,841.21). In addition, she drew attention to the fact that the new playground equipment had come in under budget (£2,421.47) which would more than cover the expected overspend relating to the repairs to the bus shelters.

21/93. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 6th and 27th April 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/94. BURIAL AUTHORITY

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 6th April 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/95. URGENT BUSINESS

Whilst not urgent business, the Chair commented that progress had been made on obtaining quotes for the roller shutters at the Pavilion.

21/96. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- as mentioned earlier in the meeting, from the next onwards, physical meetings are required and a risk assessment, taking into account the instructions from venues used, will be completed and circulated prior to the June meeting;
- those present were reminded that weekend closures of the A120 for the construction of the two new roundabouts continue until early June; and
- in recent months, a number of out of area licensing notifications had been received. Whilst they are consultations, only those that relate to parish premises will be brought to the attention of the Parish Council.

21/97. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 1st June 2021 at 7:30 pm and arrangements to be confirmed by the Clerk.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:03 pm.

APPENDIX A

PORTFOLIO & Areas of responsibility	Committees	Cllrs
GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE Insurances, legal issues, training, ensuring that Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct are adhered to, co-options, agenda management, risk management, finance oversight, complaints handling. Liaison with PG>, Recreation Trust, EHC, HCC, HAPTC Priorities: Policy reviews / updates		Ian Hunt Penny Taylor
STAFFING Management of employee (Clerk) and HR issues Priorities:	Staffing Committee Staffing Sub-committee Chair: Cllr Mrs P Taylor	Jan Liversage Stewart Smith Penny Taylor
BURIAL AUTHORITY Burial grounds maintenance and expansion, church liaison Priorities: Burial Authority 10 year plan. 2017-27 progress	Burial Authority Chair: Cllr Mrs P Taylor	Kathy Hamilton Jan Liversage Bill O'Neill Penny Taylor Ken Twort
COMMUNITY FACILITIES Community groups liaison (Sports Association (SA), Pavilion management, Village Hall (VH) management), war memorial, bus stops, telephone boxes, millennium sikh, playground Priorities: Work with SA on re-organising management of Rec Ground; Work with VHMC on its priorities; management / caretaking of Pavilion	VH and SA reps	SA reps: Duncan McDonald Ken Twort VH reps: Kathy Hamilton Bill O'Neill
ENVIRONMENT including PRoW Parish paths, PC-owned land maintenance, tree surgery, litter and dog bins, conservation area, river and stream quality, flood plan (culverts & ditches) Priorities: FP 10 Dell Cottage / Moor Place paths; litter and dog waste		Stewart Smith + others when required
HIGHWAYS Maintenance reporting (potholes, drains, pavements, street lighting etc), traffic calming, parking etc. Priorities: Traffic management (village and hamlets), complete street lighting project		Bill O'Neill Stewart Smith Penny Taylor
MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, Website, publicity in general Priorities: Facebook policy – required; Increase website usage		Heidi Maduhu
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN Priorities: NP to be approved at referendum	NP Steering Group Chair: Cllr I Hunt	Ian Hunt Bill O'Neill
PLANNING Planning applications Priorities: Work with EHC to improve planning enforcement, a solution for Jolly Waggoners?	Planning Committee Chair: Cllr I Hunt	Ian Hunt Duncan McDonald Bill O'Neill Stewart Smith Ken Twort
SECURITY Police liaison, Fire and rescue liaison, Neighbourhood Watch liaison, Rural Watch liaison		Heidi Maduhu

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 4 MAY 2021

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2022	DATE	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00	-	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	-	
New Homes Bonus	9,097.00	-	
Pavilion income	7,020.00	780.00	
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	0.01	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	-	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	780.01	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	1,194.26	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	2,693.73	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,768.00	-	
Administration costs	3,100.00	899.79	
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	1,500.00	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	668.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	-	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	600.95	
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	5,578.53	Cost less than expected.
VAT	5,000.00	1,256.23	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	15,113.74	