

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 1st June 2021, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7:32 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 1 members of the public.

21/98. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

21/99. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

21/100. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/101. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed those present to the first face-to-face meeting for some time and reminded everyone to avoid using the toilets, if possible, and to wear a face mask on leaving the Hall.

In addition, the Chair highlighted that the Parish Council are supporting the community ideas that have been advertised on the back page of the current parish magazine and elsewhere by the CareBank team. A number of great ideas and suggestions have been identified but not yet the people to take them forward. It is hoped that volunteers will come forward once the COVID restrictions ease further.

21/102. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 4th May 2021 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

21/103. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The report on outstanding matters was circulated with the agenda and the following updates were provided:

- dog and litter bins for the Recreation Ground – the Clerk confirmed that the orders had been placed for these bins;
- overgrown hedges – the Clerk confirmed that details of properties in Windmill Way to be sent a letter regarding overgrown hedges had just been received and letters would be issued in the next few days;
- basketball area repairs – quote to improve the area in front of the basketball hoop expected on 2nd June;
- water testing at the Pavilion – the Clerk to confirm that this had taken place;
- Village Sign – repair work expected to start towards end of July/beginning of August. Cllr K Twort would be checking availability dates to assist with removing the sign;
- copyright breach – the Clerk to chase the developer for the outstanding actions required;
- 3 month tree works – the Chair reported that the approval for the tree works had been received from East Herts Council today;
- quotes for roller door at the Pavilion – the Chair reported that one further quote was still being sought; and
- bus shelters repairs – the Clerk confirmed that bus shelter repairs would start in August, as previously noted when the quote was accepted.

21/104. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllr D McDonald reported that there had been an attempted break in at the Pavilion (outside toilet) which had been reported to the Police. In addition, help was requested for Friday 4th June to move the contents of the Pavilion away changing room into the main room as the Saturday Football Team were using both changing rooms. Cllrs I Hunt and B O'Neill agreed to assist the Chair.

Cllr B O'Neill reported that it had been highlighted to him that people had been using the hedge near the tennis courts as a toilet and, consequently, that area was extremely unpleasant.

Cllr K Twort reported that young people had been playing football again on the bowling green. The matter had been reported to the Police but no action taken as their view is that security in the area needs to be tightened. The Clerk highlighted that a local authority CCTV partnership had been in touch and details would be provided to the Bowls Club and although a rough estimation of costs had been sought, none was forthcoming.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton reported that the Village Hall Management Committee Chair had provided the following update:

- a number of groups have returned under the current COVID rules and a number of other groups plan to return in September. The Mother and Toddler Group is unlikely to return given that no leader has come forward to organise activities; and
- a five year maintenance and development plan is being drawn up and ideas are welcomed.

The Clerk clarified that the Village Hall AGM had been held in April and Cllr B O'Neill commented that the Drama Group was trying to organise a show for November.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that the warm May weather had resulted in exceedingly rapid growth in plants, shrubs and grassed areas. This growth has caused problems for residents as complaints had been received about encroachment from hedgerows. In addition, visibility along several country lanes had been affected and farmers had been instructed by Herts County Council (HCC) to cut the growth down in potentially dangerous places such as crossroads.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- bridge repairs - 6 month closure orders are now in place for the bridge that crosses the Parish boundary into High Wych, near Old Park Farm on Footpath 44 and the bridge crossing the River Ash at the end of Footpath 20. Notices will be placed at convenient locations to inform walkers and ramblers to take alternative routes. In addition:
 - as one side of the Footpath 44 bridge is lower than the other, new steps will be installed in consultation with the Environment Agency; and
 - for the Footpath 20 bridge, HCC will involve both Ringway and the Environment Agency as the repair is more complicated given the involvement of pipes and cables;
- diversion order for Footpath 11 at Kettle Green Lane - consultation period has just begun for the order. If needed, a request for the installation of a safety barrier will be sent to the agents for the landowners involved;
- trimming – given the rapid growth referred to earlier, changes have been requested to the current cycle of trimming to enable urgent clearance where needed, for example, where the footpath becomes unpassable; and

- meeting with owner of Moor Place – meeting had taken place involving Cllr S Smith, the owner, his business secretary, HCC representative and the Chair. The owner’s concerns regarding the intrusion onto his property from users of Footpath 10, which crosses his land from Kettle Green Lane through to the High Street at Moor Place Gate, were discussed. In addition, the owner raised concerns about the behaviour of dogs and their owners, and the short cut from and to the footpath through to the Recreation Ground over, or through the existing locked gate, which he felt contributed to the misuse of the footpath. A compromise suggestion to provide alternative access at the site of the old stile, just beyond the tennis courts, was declined and the broken fence in that spot had been repaired. In the end, it was agreed that HCC would install 3 way-marker posts to indicate the exact route for users of the footpath to take and the owner would install his own signage, on his land, reminding people that it was “Private Property” and for users not to deviate away from the footpath route. It was also noted that the owner’s signage had subsequently been removed, by persons unknown.

In relation to the Footpath 11 diversion order, Cllr B O’Neill commented that children had been seen playing “dare” on that slope therefore a safety barrier was definitely needed.

In discussion, it was noted that dog fouling remains a significant issue, with signage being ignored. In addition, other examples of vandalism were noted.

(iii) Highways

The Chair reported that a further liaison meeting with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) and Ringway would be taking place at the end of June.

Cllr B O’Neill reported that progress on the parish lighting project had slowed as Ringway were waiting for supplies. In the meantime, 9 columns had been removed.

Cllr S Smith reported that the bridge at the top of Danebridge Road had been repaired but the clearance of stones from Watery Lane and the redefinition of the roadside in Danebridge Road was still outstanding. In addition, he highlighted that a number of potholes had still not been repaired. This would be raised at the liaison meeting mentioned earlier.

(iv) Media

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that 296 people were reached across three posts completed on Facebook over the month. The post relating to dog fouling had invited comments, but no responses were received. In addition, she reported that the Facebook Social Media Policy was in progress but queried whether it should include Nextdoor and Twitter given access to these social platforms was difficult with the live authentication process required. The Clerk confirmed that no emails had been received recently via the info@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk email address from these bodies. In addition, the Clerk highlighted that it would be possible to automate these emails to be forwarded

directly to Cllr Mrs H Maduhu. Cllr Mrs H Maduhu and the Clerk would seek to resolve these issues.

In addition, Cllr Mrs H Maduhu reported that she had recently conducted a live interview on the life and background of the Chair. This will be published in June and will provide a glimpse into her life and allow residents a deeper understanding of who she is and why leading the Parish Council is important to her. The intention will be to feature a Cllr each month and Cllr Mrs J Liversage will be interviewed next.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that referendums were held for many neighbourhood plans across the country on 6th May, the same time as local elections, and it was encouraging to report that of 202 plans voted on, only 1 was rejected. The average vote in favour was 87%. Locally, within East Herts, plans were approved for Thundridge and two Hertford parishes.

In addition, Cllr I Hunt reported that Anne Skippers, a hugely experienced Neighbourhood Plan Examiner, had been appointed to examine Much Hadham's Neighbourhood Plan. The examination would be starting in the coming days and whatever support she requires will be provided.

Finally, Cllr I Hunt report that he was aware that ill-informed comments had been circulating among a small number of residents about the Regulation 16 consultation held by East Herts Council, including a suggestion that there was a risk of development at Dolan's Field. The comments were entirely baseless and the promoter of them has been advised accordingly. If anyone still has concerns about these comments, these can be discussed with Cllr I Hunt.

(vi) Security

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

- St Andrews Church - an amount of copper had been removed from the low-level roof at the church despite a roof alarm being in place. Police had completed their enquiries and no suspects had been identified. As the location was a place of worship and a heritage site, it would also be considered a heritage crime; and
- burglary at the fire station - suspects had gained entry to the fire station and had removed important and expensive equipment used by fire officers, before making off in an unknown direction. Police enquiries are currently in hand to progress this crime further as the fire station had CCTV in place.

(vii) Other

Stansted Airport

Cllr D McDonald reported that the outcome of the Stansted Enquiry was that Manchester Airport Group (which own Stansted Airport) had won thereby securing permission for up to 43 million passengers a year. The Inspectors had concluded, to quote:

“[whilst] there would be a limited degree of harm arising in respect of air quality and carbon emissions, these matters are far outweighed by the benefits of the proposal and do not come close to indicating a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. No other material considerations have been identified that would materially alter this balance.”

The Inspectors had rejected arguments that accompanying expansion work associated with lifting the cap was premature, as they considered that the greater certainty of the ability to grow at Stansted was more beneficial in the longer term despite the consequences raised by Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) and a number of Parish Councils, including Much Hadham.

Note: existing passenger numbers and the COVID impact means the new cap is significantly higher than existing throughput.

Cllr D McDonald also highlighted that the conduct of Uttlesford District Council (UDC) at the Enquiry had been unhelpful to the appeal. Despite its Planning Committee voting unanimously to refuse the application for further expansion in 2020, at the Enquiry, UDC argued the planning application should be approved subject to a few minor conditions. The Inspectors described UDC’s conduct as “wholly unreasonable” (which he considered it was) and made a costs order against it – UDC (or rather the taxpayer) can expect a bill for a seven digit sum.

Finally, Cllr D McDonald reported that SSE were considering whether there were any grounds for appeal although he suspected there were none. In addition, SSE were establishing a parallel organisation - “Stansted Airport Watch” - the focus of which would be much more modest (though no less important): to monitor activities at the airport to seek to ensure that the activities there will “remain below harmful limits”.

21/105. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) provided the following update on Planning given the increase in planning applications coinciding with some staff turnover in a short period of time:

- minor planning applications have been outsourced to Capita;
- recruitment is underway to fill vacancies in all levels of the Planning Department;
- backlog of enforcement cases were being worked through with urgent cases being responded to and site visits undertaken as required;

- internal site visits had commenced in line with EHC’s health and safety risk assessments and protocols; and
- an operational letter explaining the current situation had been sent to Town and Parish Councils.

In addition, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that he had queried with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) why the passing bays in Kettle Green Lane were not being installed as part of the resurfacing work. The response had been that the passing bays had to be dug out and filled in with hardcore before the resurfacing work and same contractors were not being used for both the passing bays and the resurfacing hence could not be done at the same time.

21/106. RESIDENTS’ COMMENTS

(i) Scout leader

On behalf of the 1st Much Hadham Scout Group, a resident highlighted that the Group had grown in size and were looking for anyone who may be interested in either joining as a leader or assisting occasionally. Training and support would be provided, and anyone interested could contact the Group Scout Leader via gsl@1stmuchhadhamscouts.co.uk.

21/107. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - JUNE 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP48	Auditing Solutions	Internal Audit review 2020/21	534.00
OP49	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Swing repair	168.00
OP50	PR Newson Ltd	Tree survey - investigations	192.00
OP51	East Herts Council	Annual dog bin charges	1,431.23
OP52	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (May)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (June)	334.00
OP53	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (June)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£3,336.36</u>

Payments would be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr K Twort and Cllr B O’Neill.

(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 A.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 1 JUNE 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,111.38	24,744.29	105,855.67
Income	25,401.23	-	25,401.23
Expenditure	- 18,450.10	- 395.00	- 18,845.10
Closing balance	<u>88,062.51</u>	<u>24,349.29</u>	<u>112,411.80</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 reminded those present that the borrowing approval for the loan for the parish lighting project was only valid for a year. In the next few months, the final costs of the project and the amount of loan to draw down would need to be clarified.

21/108. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/109. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- A120 bypass - weekend road closures of the A120 during May were affected by the weather so some did not happen as expected. Consequently, a further weekend road closure was planned for June – effectively the A120 would be closed for the next two weekends; and
- East Herts Council virtual engagement event – event is being held on 2nd June and will include updates on rural e-vehicle charging, grants and lottery funding, East

Herts Cultural Strategy and a Q & A session aimed at identifying topics for future sessions. Spaces are still available if any Cllr wants to attend.

It was agreed that the Clerk would submit a suggestion of a future topic to East Herts Council's (EHC) virtual engagement event – opportunity for parish and town councils to liaise with EHC's Planning Department.

21/110. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 6th July 2021 at 7:30 pm at the Green Tye Mission Hall, subject to the removal of the social distancing requirements on 21st June. The Village Hall was provisionally booked just in case these requirements are not removed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 1 JUNE 2021

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2022	DATE	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00	21,000.00	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	-	
New Homes Bonus	9,097.00	-	
Pavilion income	7,020.00	1,560.00	
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	0.02	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,841.21	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	25,401.23	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	1,791.39	
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	445.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	-	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,400.00	2,992.69	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	1,002.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	-	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	680.95	
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	1,643.77	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	18,450.10	