

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd August 2021, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, 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 5 members of the public. PCSO Leon de Bruyn was also in attendance, and he provided his report at the start of the meeting (recorded at 21/134 (vi)).

21/128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absences were received and approved from Cllr Mrs H Maduhu and Cllr B O'Neill.

21/129. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

21/130. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/131. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- the Tower Hill phone box is now a "Book Box" and the residents involved in establishing this were thanked. It was noted that people are welcome to help themselves to books, or make a swap, but leaving large amounts of books is discouraged; and
- everyone was encouraged to support two upcoming community events:
 - the Green Tye Players are running an outdoor event with the "What's That Band" up at Green Tye on Saturday 7th August; and
 - the Recreation Trust is running a cinema night, since it is not possible to hold the Fete this year, at the Recreation Ground on Saturday 11th September. The movie being shown is "Mamma Mia".

Details for obtaining tickets can be found on posters around the village as well as in the Parish Magazine.

21/132. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

21/133. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The report on outstanding matters had been circulated and the following updates were provided for items not specifically covered later in the meeting:

- defibrillator – potential for a joint venture with St Andrew’s School is being pursued. More information being obtained for further discussions in September;
- bins – additional rubbish bins and dog bin for the Recreation Ground delivered this week will potentially be installed this coming weekend;
- basketball area – quote for the surface repair to the basketball area still being sought;
- village sign copyright – the St Michael’s Hurst sign has been removed;
- bus shelter repair – work due to start on the 16th August; and
- village sign refurbishment – sign had been taken down and now with Sign of the Times for refurbishment. When taking the sign down, it had not been possible to remove the bolts so the tops had been cut. These bolts would need to be removed before the sign was reattached.

21/134. MEMBERS’ REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllr Mrs J Liversage confirmed that she was obtaining quotes for a new sign and two light posts to light the car park.

The Chair reported intention to meet with the cleaner to revisit arrangements. In addition, she reported that she had been striving to obtain a third quote for the roller shutters, so would bring just the two existing quotes for consideration at the next Parish Council meeting.

The Clerk reported that the Woodland Cottage, in the playground, had been repaired. In addition, she highlighted that the ROSPA inspection report had just been received and a quick perusal of the report indicated that all items were either low or very low risk. A summary of this report together with the quarterly maintenance report would be included on the agenda for the September meeting.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton reported that the Village Hall was gradually returning to the new normal with many regular groups having returned or planning to in September, complying with the latest COVID guidance issued by the Management Committee. Maintenance/improvement works continue and good progress is being made on the 5-year plan for developments.

In terms of the car park, it was noted that the number of cars parking but not using the Hall had reduced, probably as a result of the notices being placed on windscreens.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that the continued combination of rain and sunny periods resulted in yet further increased growth of foliage, trees, shrubs, and hedgerows. Within its limited budget, Herts County Council (HCC) were able to give a few of the worst hit footpaths and roadsides interim attention before the second part of the annual schedule began this week.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- Footpath 11 diversion order at Kettle Green Lane: consultation for the diversion order has begun and will end on 26th August – see 21/138 for the Parish Council's response. HCC have suggested to the diversion order applicant that they organise and pay for trimming back the undergrowth of the newly proposed route to demonstrate to footpath users that this new route is an acceptable alternative;
- Footpath 6 (Cox Lane to New Barns Lane): footpath is heavily overgrown on the arable headland and HCC's contractor will mow it and replace the collapsed waymark post. Similar action has been requested for Bridleway 53 at Camwell Hall;
- Footpaths 11, 13 and 14: emergency mowing has been undertaken on these footpaths as well as the removal of a fallen tree on Footpath 13 and the clearance of vegetation from the roadside steps of Footpath 11;
- Footpath 45: abandoned Land Rover has been removed by the police;
- Footpaths by Henry Moore Foundation (HMF) (29, 31, 32 and 43): a resident had highlighted that HMF staff were challenging people diverting from Footpath 32 when the footpath was impenetrable and unusable.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Chair reported that Kettle Green Lane had been walked with Highways on 16th July to identify all the passing places. Highways will walk again with the contractor prior to the work being undertaken.

In terms of the Hadham Cross junction, a junction warning sign is already in place but not visible so does not affect people's driving. It will be difficult to get this improved. It was also noted that one of the new posts has been damaged by a lorry turning left out of Kettle Green Lane to reach Standon via Little Hadham and the A120.

The Clerk confirmed that the edging works at the St Thomas triangle were in progress when the agendas were posted on the noticeboards. In addition, she commented that the works made the triangle appear to be larger and therefore the road appear to be narrower.

Cllr S Smith reported that he continued to request that Herts County Council and East Herts Council provide some care and attention to the road surface of Danebridge Road. The main issues were:

- the continuous presence of flood water following any period of heavy rain. Adequate drainage facilities are needed and/or need to be cleared as the water does not go anywhere;
- the volume of sludge, mud, stones and other unwanted debris also needs to be removed;
- the road has lost its definition in a number of places, i.e. where the roadside actually ends and the undergrowth begins;
- the hedgerows need to be trimmed back to improve visibility for drivers; and
- the overgrown hedgerows also hide the nearness of the roadside to the sheer drop of 14 feet or more to the river running alongside. Judging by the tyre tracks several near misses have occurred.

In addition, Cllr S Smith reiterated the need for better signage to stop very large vehicles using the road, to inform drivers to be considerate speed wise and be watchful of walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Lastly to warn drivers not to attempt to use Watery Lane when it becomes a flood hazard.

Street lighting

Cllr I Hunt summarised points from Cllr B O'Neill's report on the lighting project (reproduced in Appendix A for information), namely the environmental benefits, safer columns and ongoing cost savings. Once the project has been completed, modifications will be identified for action by a walk round. It has already been identified that one column needs to be straightened.

In addition, Cllr I Hunt stated that the Parish Council is aware of some residents' views with respect to some individual columns but reiterated that the project is not complete yet and modifications might still be considered.

(iv) Media

On behalf of Cllr Mrs H Maduhu the Clerk reported the Facebook page statistics which highlight increased engagement. In addition, the statistics demonstrate that the Facebook page is more popular with women within the age range of 35-54.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt reported that the appointed Examiner has had to take long term sick leave without having started the examination and a replacement Examiner is being sought.

(vi) Security

PCSO Leon de Bruyn attended the meeting and provided the following update:

- no crimes had been reported in the last month;
- reports are still being received via ECHO of speeding on the B1004 near the Jolly Waggoners;
- a Regional Support Speed Van was now available for use within the East Herts area and locations for the van to be used are being considered;
- from coverage in the news, e-scooter crimes in rural areas are increasing and, although no such crimes reported locally, people are reminded to be vigilant;
- a number of police resources had been deployed to the recent music event in Standon, particularly on the last night when a stand collapsed due to the bad weather. A similar but smaller music event is planned in Little Hadham towards the end of the month but no police support has been requested; and
- the leadership of the team was changing soon as the current Inspector and Sergeant were retiring.

The Chair highlighted that Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) had notified the Parish Council about the "Speed Van" as well as highlighting that there were issues with finding places to safely park it. PCSO Leon de Bruyn confirmed that he would be liaising with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) on this matter.

A resident also highlighted that speeding was an issue at the other end of the village, particularly around 5:30 – 6 am.

On behalf of Cllr Mrs H Maduhu, the Clerk reported that discussions had been initiated with Herts CCTV and a quote will be sought for installing CCTV cameras at the Recreation Ground, in consultation with the Sports Association. Once a site visit has been arranged, other Cllrs will be welcome to attend.

(vii) Other (inc Nature Reserve)

Nature Reserve

Following the last meeting where authority was delegated to Cllr I Hunt and Cllr D McDonald to make enquiries regarding the purchase of the land, Cllr I Hunt reported that investigations had identified an issue with the right of access between the two plots of land. This had been rectified as the parties to the agreement creating the right of access had agreed to transfer that access strip so that it was now part of the land for sale. Consequently, the overall package of land would now enable community use extending from the Recreation Ground to Kettle Green Lane if the Parish Council acquired it.

Cllr I Hunt noted that there are other parties interested in acquiring the land who would be able to complete a deal far quicker than the Parish Council could. For example, the Parish Council would have to hold a formal public consultation over several weeks in order to access public loan finance.

Finally, Cllr I Hunt reported that correspondence had taken place with the selling agents on the local planning policies and conditions for this land. It was understood that the selling agents would emphasise to potential buyers that they need to understand these policies so there is no misapprehension as to what the land can be used for.

21/135. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

21/136. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) St Thomas triangle

A resident confirmed that the work on the triangle at St Thomas' had been completed but it had made the road appear narrower when that corner was already dangerous. It was suggested that warning signs should be erected.

The Chair commented that it was very unlikely the triangle had changed from its original size.

(ii) Lighting project

A resident commented that street lighting is meant to be designed, taking into account the environment, and reflected that it was not possible to see what the design was down the High Street, with the new columns and the varying heights of the columns.

Cllr I Hunt stated that the intention was not to change all the lights in the High Street as some of the existing lights were capable of being converted to LED. The Parish Council does

not have an endless supply of funds therefore compromises were required. It was also recognised that the new columns were taller than expected.

(iii) Danebridge Road

A resident highlighted that a tree was ready to fall on Danebridge Road. Cllr S Smith agreed to investigate and report it to Herts County Council.

(iv) Ragwort dumping

On behalf of a resident, Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that ragwort had been dumped on Blackbridge Lane, near the bridge which needed to be reported to DEFRA. Cllr S Smith agreed to investigate and report.

Linked to this, it was noted that action should be taken to have certain roads removed from SatNavs as the smaller roads are not suitable for larger vehicles. It was highlighted that a “do not follow SatNav” sign was in place on Blackbridge Lane, leading to the suggestion that the Parish Council may need to resort to putting up its own signs to discourage use of Malting Lane and Danebridge Road, by SatNav followers.

21/137. GRANT APPLICATION FROM THE RECREATION TRUST

The Chair highlighted that the Recreation Trust had applied for a grant to support the cinema event it was running in September and the application had been circulated to all Cllrs.

Prior to the meeting, additional questions had been raised with the Recreation Trust and the Clerk had obtained the following responses:

- if it looks like rain, the gazebos and large marquee used for the Fete would be arranged in a wide semi-circle around the screen and should provide ample cover. The event may need to be cancelled in the event of very heavy rain;
- ticket money would be reimbursed if the event was cancelled which would be covered, as well as other costs, by the event insurance being obtained; and
- around 200 tickets needed to be sold to breakeven. Indicative costs and revenue information had been provided, highlighting that the profit is expected to come from the food and drink sold at the event as 40% (plus VAT) of the ticket sales were payable as a licensing fee for the film.

In addition, the Clerk highlighted that £1,000 was included in the budget each year for grants and donations and no payments had been made since 2018/19.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to award a grant of £900 to the Recreation Trust. It was noted in the discussion that the Recreation Trust plays an important role in raising funds for the village.

21/138. FOOTPATH 11 DIVERSION ORDER

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to support the proposed Footpath 11 diversion subject to the installation of a safety barrier at point C on the map supporting the diversion order.

21/139. PAVILION

Cllr K Twort explained that the quote on the agenda reflected the assessment undertaken of the Pavilion following the last meeting. Some items were specific requests, for example the storage boxes in the home changing rooms, urgent repairs and with the remainder being to “refresh” the building. In addition, he highlighted that there will always be similar work required given the nature of the building.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve the following elements of the quote:

- create storage boxes under the benches in the home changing room (£780 + VAT);
- power wash the exterior and touch up damaged areas (£480 + VAT);
- install an inline descaler (£650 + VAT); and
- complete the electrical works required to remove and resite the radiator in the home changing room (£320 + VAT).

For the remaining items on the quote:

- Cllr K Twort would further investigate the issue with the shower heads (£660 + VAT); and
- the Clerk would seek further details in relation to the jobbing repairs item (£1,250 + VAT)

It was noted that some elements of the jobbing repairs item had already been undertaken as classified as urgent works, namely the door alignments and locks.

In addition, the possibility of installing a heavy duty shower curtain to be investigated as this may prevent the excessive water spray from the showers. The Chair highlighted that those in the away changing room had been descaled, leading to some improvement. However, she indicated that if it was considered that new shower heads would improve matters, she would like to see just one replacement installed, as an experiment.

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that there were some funds in the budget for repair work at the Pavilion and that the income from the existing long term hire would cover the expected costs.

21/140. GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

(i) Code of Conduct

The Clerk highlighted that the proposed Code of Conduct was based on the version approved by East Herts Council which had, in turn, been based on the approved national model. The national model had been circulated to all Cllrs in early June. In addition, the Clerk reported that:

- on page 2, the definition of co-option refers to Cllrs within principal authorities being co-opted on to committees. Parish Councils use this term in relation to the co-option process which is used to fill casual vacancies in between elections. Once co-opted, that person becomes a Cllr; and
- guidance will be issued in due course to help apply the provisions in the new Code relating to the declaration of interests, effectively examples and clarity for specific wording.

Finally, the Clerk stated that Appendix C in the proposed Code had been added by East Herts Council to have all Code of Conduct issues in one place. The process for seeking dispensations was outlined in Standing Orders – section 13. The Clerk proposed that the Parish Council's Appendix C should include the wording from its Standing Orders, primarily 13d onwards, with an amendment to refer to the specific form to be used which is available from her.

RESOLVED to approve the Code of Conduct including the proposed amended Appendix C.

(ii) Standing Orders

The Clerk explained that some minor amendments had been proposed to the Standing Orders to update references and reflect the withdrawal from the European Union (EU). In addition, as outlined in respect of the Code of Conduct, an additional amendment was proposed for 13d – to insert “on the designated form” after the reference to the Proper Officer on the first line.

RESOLVED to approve the revised Standing Orders including the proposed amendment to 13d.

(iii) Financial Regulations

The Clerk summarised the changes proposed to the Financial Regulations as:

- updating references to guides and reflecting the withdrawal from the EU – same as the amendment made to the Standing Orders;
- sharpening the Regulations in relation to making payments via online banking;
- increasing limits to ensure practical application, primarily in terms of authority to spend (para 4.1) and to enable emergency repairs (para 4.5); and
- improved formatting of the Regulations relating to obtaining quotes to make the financial levels clearer (para 11.1i).

RESOLVED to approve the revised Financial Regulations.

(iv) Social Media Policy

The Clerk explained that this policy had been prepared by Cllr Mrs H Maduhu.

RESOLVED to approve the Social Media Policy.

The Chair thanked the Clerk and Cllr Mrs H Maduhu for all their work on these documents.

21/141. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

The Clerk reminded those present that when the agenda was issued, 3 payments had been included on the schedule of payment of accounts in advance of deliveries and/or invoices. These payments were in relation to the bus shelter repairs, rubbish bins and dog bin. It was now possible to confirm bin deliveries and invoices had been received.

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - AUGUST 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP63	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Quarterly playground inspection (June)	60.00
OP64	E.ON	Lighting for war memorial	35.87
OP65	Wight Computers	Web hosting & domain renewal (2 years)	187.18
OP66	CPRE	Annual membership	36.00
OP67	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Woodland Cottage repair	378.00
OP68	T Walker	Hedge cutting - Causeway	145.00
OP69	EHC	Playground inspection report (ROSPA)	55.14
OP70	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (July)	80.00
OP71	Alexander Machinery Limited	Tree work	2,376.00
OP72	Gooch Carpentry & Refurbishments Ltd	50% of bus shelter repairs	5,385.00
OP73	Broxap	Purchase of dog bin	137.60
OP74	Kingfisher Direct Limited	Purchase of 2 rubbish bins	867.21
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (August)	334.00
OP75	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (August)	597.13
DD	BA Castle Water	Water for St Andrew's Burial Ground	45.32
Total payments			<u>£10,719.45</u>

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

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2021/22 to date was received. The summary financial position is detailed overleaf and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix B. No matters were highlighted by the Clerk.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 3 AUGUST 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,111.38	24,744.29	105,855.67
Income	27,277.25	330.00	27,607.25
Expenditure	- 30,887.49	- 918.71	- 31,806.20
Closing balance	<u><u>77,501.14</u></u>	<u><u>24,155.58</u></u>	<u><u>101,656.72</u></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><u>34,320.00</u></u>

In addition, the Clerk reported that the 2020/21 external audit was progressing, highlighting that she had been asked to clarify why the carried forward balance was more than twice the precept – due to the inclusion of the Burial Authority balance. The inspection period had ended on the 14th July so an audit report can be issued and it is anticipated that this will be available for the September meeting.

Finally, in response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan grant still needed to be progressed.

21/142. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th July 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/143. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/144. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

21/145. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 7th September 2021 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall. It was agreed that in the current circumstances, the meeting would not be preceded by refreshments.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:25 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL LIGHTING PROJECT

This report was not read out during the meeting but referred to – Minute ref: 21/134(iii)

In 2017, the Parish Council received ever increasing numbers of complaints about its lights.

So, an inspection was carried out and many lights were found to be in a very poor state of repair, the lights were very dim, inefficient and unreliable.

This prompted the Parish Council to get professional advice on how to fix this problem.

It was discovered that many Parish Councils had already upgraded their lights and handed their management over to Herts County Council who have a department dedicated to lighting and are already responsible for most of the lights in the parish.

This seemed a good plan. Over the next three years, three surveys were conducted by lighting consultants who all agreed that 11 lights could be removed from the system thereby reducing light pollution and saving 28% on costs.

Each light was considered individually and assessed for safety and effectiveness.

It was discovered that the Parish Council had been paying for decades for two lights which did not exist and for another light which belonged to Herts County Council.

The safety issue became much more imperative when column 61 outside the Almshouses fell over. Had this happened on a school day, there could have been serious injuries or fatalities and the Parish Council would have been deemed to be negligent. The column had corroded just below ground level which made it dangerously unstable. The Parish Council had 24 columns which were potentially in the same dangerous condition and so these needed to be replaced before Herts County Council would agree to adopt them.

Many of these columns also had a design fault which made them unsafe to maintain because lighting maintenance engineers had suffered serious electric shocks.

Removing the Victorian columns was not a choice but a necessity for safety and public liability reasons. It would be negligent not to tackle this problem.

The choice of replacement equipment was guided by a number of factors.

Ease of maintenance was an important issue. The new columns will not need painting or cleaning.

The height of the columns will produce a better spread of light. The replica Victorian lanterns have a disadvantage that they spread light in all directions. This can be mitigated by shielding.

The new system will light the highway as well as the footway. This is an improvement because all the parked cars in the High Street will be better protected from the ever increasing volume of traffic which passes through the village.

The lighting system will be much more controllable. Lighting times and intensity can be varied seasonally, and the lights will not be on all night which will be of benefit to many nocturnal species which inhabit our parish. Additionally individual lights can be adjusted should the need arise. The lights also use much less energy which will offset the additional demand for electricity when all our cars are electric. How a car charging system is set up for the parish is another challenge for the near future.

The cost of the system was considered with the whole parish in mind. The Hamlets have no lighting and Windmill Way and Ash Meadow already have upgraded lights although there are very poorly lit walkways in Windmill Way.

Initially replica Victorian columns were considered but these greatly increased the cost of the project without adding any real historical value. The chosen columns are a better design for their purpose (that is why they are used so much).

The Parish Council does not have an obligation to light any individual property and nor does Herts County Council. We live in a time where many people carry a light at all times and solar lighting is increasingly reliable and effective for individual locations.

The Parish Council recognised the historical significance of the old columns which is why these have been kept ready to be installed safely in various places such as, for example, The Forge, Mission Hall, School, and some residents have expressed an interest in acquiring a column for their gardens. Any proceeds generated will be put towards the project.

Cllr B O'Neill

Note: the Parish Council approved a Business Case for the lighting project at its 21st July 2020 meeting which is available from the Clerk.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 3 AUGUST 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	3,272.00	Includes £100 damage deposit for hire
Grant	300.00	164.00	
Other	60.00	0.04	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,841.21	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	27,277.25	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	2,985.65	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	2,693.73	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,768.00	-	
Administration costs	3,100.00	1,139.77	
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	6,559.32	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	1,670.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	67.95	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	1,155.47	
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	4,487.50	50% of estimate
Capital - Playground equipment	8,000.00	5,578.53	Cost less than expected.
VAT	5,000.00	3,382.32	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	30,887.49	