

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 7th September 2021, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7:31 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 member of the public.

21/146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs H Maduhu and Cllr Mrs P Taylor. In the absence of Cllr Mrs P Taylor, Cllr I Hunt chaired the meeting. Apologies were also received from the District Council representative – Cllr I Devonshire (EHC).

21/147. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr S Smith declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 21/156(i)) and would therefore not be voting on the related motion but could participate as he had been granted a dispensation to do so at the October 2019 meeting (Minute ref: 19/163).

No other declarations were made or applications for dispensations sought.

21/148. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/149. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advertised two upcoming major events, namely:

- the showing of Mamma Mia at the Recreation Ground on 11th September, with further details and tickets available from the Recreation Trust's website; and
- the celebration of the 800th anniversary of St Andrew's church on the following Saturday, the 18th September from 2pm, with afternoon tea and tree planting. For catering purposes, attendance needs to be booked via standrews800@gmail.com.

21/150. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd August 2021 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

21/151. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

Repairs to bus shelters

Cllr S Smith reported that excellent progress had been made on repairing the two bus shelters, with the expectation that the work would be finished by 10th September. The contractor had highlighted the following specific points:

- Broadfield Close: the existing sole plate had completely rotted away as well as part of the studs. To the rear of the roof structure, some rafters and both hips had to be replaced. In addition, the rear fascia was badly rotted and had been replaced. In terms of costs, the contractors had exceeded their budget due to extra labour, and the cost and availability of materials, in particular the cost of shingles which had more than doubled since the beginning of the year; and
- Church Lane: as this shelter lies under a tree and other foliage, the roof had been given a coat of preservative to prevent sap and other damaging secretions rotting the shingles. This was the primary cause of the old shingle roof rotting away. The colour of the roof will look slightly darker than for the other shelter, but over the course of time this will not be so apparent.

Cllr S Smith stated that the contractor would provide a full report to the Parish Council in due course. In the meantime, the shelters will be inspected once the work has been completed to ensure in line with the approved quote.

In addition, it was agreed that annual maintenance of the shelters be documented and undertaken.

Village sign

The Clerk provided an update on the refurbishment of the village sign from the contractor, highlighting that it would be a further 2-3 weeks before the sign was back in the village.

Cllr K Twort outlined the problems with the post for the sign and it was agreed that it would be prudent to replace the post now. The contractor undertaking the repairs to the bus shelter to be approached for a quote for a new post, pre-drilled with holes using the existing post as a template.

All remaining outstanding items will be covered by specific agenda items.

21/152. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Pavilion

Cllr K Twort reported that the contractor was working through the list of items identified previously and it was agreed to proceed with installation of the heavy-duty shower curtains.

Recreation Ground

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that a meeting had taken place with a lighting contractor to investigate the cost of installing lights in the Recreation Ground carpark. The recommendation was for two lights at £365 + VAT each, with the cost of installation being extra. The proposal had been discussed with the Sports Association Chair.

The Clerk confirmed that funding was available within the amount set aside for Open Spaces.

Following discussion, it was agreed to develop this proposal further.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton had no matters to highlight.

Playground

The Clerk had circulated the annual play equipment report (ROSPA) summary report together with the latest inspection report from Broadmead Leisure, highlighting that play equipment items had been assessed as either "low" or "very low" risk. In addition, she highlighted that an action plan had been developed to summarise the actions required for each item of play equipment, together with a list of supplementary items.

Following discussion, it was agreed to proceed with the costed maintenance items detailed in the action plan. For the supplementary items, seating and noticeboard, the Clerk will identify the associated costs for the next meeting.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that although the weather last month was not the best, it was at least, mainly dry. The rapid growth in vegetation has slowed but several hedgerows and paths still require attention. Residents, landowners and farmers are encouraged to take action where they are responsible. Where action is required on land not privately owned,

there are options available on Herts Country Council's (HCC) website to request action although HCC has its own planned schedule.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- Footpath 11 diversion order at Kettle Green Lane: consultation period for the diversion order ended on 26th August. Several representations and objections were received and HCC, together with the applicants' agents, will seek to resolve these, perhaps by works on the ground or by amendments to the order, and get them withdrawn. If not, the order can either be dropped or sent to the Secretary of State, who would decide whether to hold a public local inquiry, informal hearing, or exchange of representations; and
- maintenance: several footpaths and bridleways had been trimmed and cleared back as part of the second annual maintenance phase which began in the early part of August. A number of additional footpaths had been added to the schedule following notification by residents and inspection by HCC.

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that there were issues with the bridge decking by the pumping station, near the Jolly Waggoners which Cllr S Smith agreed to follow up.

Cllr B O'Neill, having tested it out, complimented the recent walk 168 circulated by the Hundred Parishes.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Cllr S Smith reported that despite continuous requests, no action had been taken by Highways to improve Danebridge Road. This will be pursued at the next Highways meeting.

Cllr D McDonald highlighted that the roads overall were not "fit for purpose", particularly for cyclists who had increased in number. To ensure that a cyclist's viewpoint was raised, he would attend the next Highways meeting.

The Chair commented that the road markings in the High Street had recently been redone. In addition, he reported that a resolution had been achieved for the pavement that had been blocked. Whilst it had been reported to Highways, no action was taken by them.

Cllr Mrs J Liversage highlighted that the drain near the Londis was blocked, and it was confirmed that this needed to be reported on Highways fault reporting.

Street lighting

Cllr B O'Neill provided an update on the current position of the street lighting project. Progress has been hindered by inappropriate parking, with six columns remaining to be

taken out and replaced. To date, there are no indications that there are any cost increases to be dealt with and so far, 7 columns have been sold and 1 will be taken to the Green Tye Mission Hall. Finally, it was felt that concerns about the height of the poles will diminish as they become more familiar.

(iv) Media

On behalf of Cllr Mrs H Maduhu, the Clerk reported that Facebook message had been received regarding a loose panel on the bridge by the Ford and this will be followed up by Cllr S Smith.

In terms of Facebook analytics, over the last 30 days the Parish Council's Facebook page reached 123 unique visitors through reactions to posts, comments, shares and clicks.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair reported that, disappointingly, there was nothing to report as the replacement Examiner is still liaising with East Herts Council over the terms of his contract.

(vi) Security

On behalf of Cllr Mrs H Maduhu, the Clerk reported that PCSO Leon de Bruyn had provided the following update:

- during August criminal activity across East Herts rural areas August had been fairly low, however roadside speed checks in Much Hadham, Albury and Stocking Pelham had been increased as these areas had been highlighted through ECHO by local residents;
- high visibility rural off-road patrols had been conducted using the quad bikes and the ATV with no offences being reported. This had been extremely well received from farmers and landowners during their busy harvesting period; and
- specifically related to Much Hadham, one residential burglary had been reported where entry had been through a broken patio door and police enquiries are ongoing.

Residents are encouraged to use ECHO, or the Herts Police Twitter or Facebook pages, to report areas of concern.

In discussion, concern was raised that the repaired bus shelters could become vandalism targets and consideration to be given to the installation of security cameras.

(vii) Other

Nature Reserve

The Chair reported that it had become clear that the prices being offered for the nature reserve for sale on Kettle Green Lane, by other potential buyers, were too high for the Parish Council to counter bid. For now, the Parish Council will be kept informed in case the opportunity to buy re-presents itself.

21/153. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

21/154. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Neighbourhood Plan delay

A resident expressed concern that the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan had been held up and queried whether the Parish Council could take action. The Chair reiterated that delay was unfortunate but only East Herts Council could progress matters with the Examiner.

(ii) Lighting at the Recreation Ground

The proposed height of the potential lighting columns at the Recreation Ground was queried by a resident, highlighting the risk that the columns could end up being too tall. In addition, the resident highlighted that a planning application may need to be submitted since the Recreation Ground is in a Conservation Area.

(iii) Sign outside Much Hadham Golf and Country Club

A resident noted that there is a large sign outside the Golf and Country Club advertising the lodges and queried whether planning permission had been obtained for it. The Chair commented that generally businesses are allowed to put up signs on their land for services provided at that location but further investigation would be made.

21/155. PAVILION

Cllr D McDonald reported that the circulated draft agreement was materially the same as the previous agreement and had been agreed with Faraway Tree Kindergarten Limited (FTKL) and the Sports Association. In addition, he stated that with COVID diminishing, it would be made available to others outside of the times agreed with FTKL.

The Chair commented that FTKL had been excellent tenants, conscientious in meeting their obligations under the agreement and the revenue goes a considerable way to meeting the ongoing costs of running the Pavilion.

RESOLVED to approve entering into an agreement with Faraway Tree Kindergarten Ltd for the use of the Pavilion from the 5 October 2021 for a period of 12 months for a monthly fee of £780.

The Clerk confirmed that Cllrs D McDonald and K Twort would sign the agreement on behalf of the Parish Council and that this would, provisionally, take place on the morning of the 15th September.

21/156. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr S Smith participated in this item but did not vote due to his declared interest and related dispensation (Minute ref: 21/147).

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - SEPTEMBER 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP79	Mr RH Labram	Tower Hill telephone box	46.58
OP80	GeoXphere Ltd	Parish Online mapping software (NP)	108.00
OP81	MH Tennis Club	Grant (from s106 monies)	3,000.00
OP82	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (August)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (September)	334.00
DD	ICO	Data protection fee	35.00
OP83	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (September)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£4,200.71</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr B O'Neill.

(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 A.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 2 SEPTEMBER 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,111.38	24,744.29	105,855.67
Income	28,832.26	540.00	29,372.26
Expenditure	- 37,426.80	- 918.71	- 38,345.51
Closing balance	<u><u>72,516.84</u></u>	<u><u>24,365.58</u></u>	<u><u>96,882.42</u></u>

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

(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation	1,570.00
(2) Streetlights	11,100.00
(3) Open spaces	18,650.00
	<u><u>31,320.00</u></u>

The Clerk highlighted that after circulating the statement:

- a further old street lamp had been sold – bringing the total sale receipts now to £1,125; and
- East Herts had just notified that the litter picking payment will be paid shortly. The Parish Council will be receiving £4,272.66.

The Clerk also reported that after the last meeting, she had identified that the New Homes Bonus was no longer being paid to Town and Parish Councils. East Herts Council (EHC) had made this decision in March 2021 but had not informed the Parish Council. In addition, it was noted that EHC had retained a pot of money from which bids could be made, providing that all bonuses received had been spent and any bid was limited to the level of expected receipt. Whilst this was a significant loss of income (£9,097), the Parish Council remains in a healthy financial position. The long term hire agreement in relation to the Pavilion is now more certain going forward and the inclusion of this income offsets the loss of the bonus. The Forward Financial Plan has been updated to demonstrate this and will be circulated once reviewed by Cllr I Hunt, together with evidence of how the Parish Council has spent its New Homes Bonus.

Finally, the Clerk highlighted that at the next Parish Council meeting, a decision would be required on the level of loan to draw down for the street lighting project. At this stage, the known project cost is £44,000 (rounded) and would be funded as follows:

- £25,000 from the loan
- £11,100 from the specific street lighting reserve
- £7,000 from the New Homes Bonus balance and
- £900 effectively from the sale of the old street lights.

Whilst there are no known cost increases, should the project cost be higher than £44,000, the loan amount can be increased but the maximum that can be sourced through the loan is £40,000, the limit of the borrowing approval received.

21/157. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 3rd August 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/158. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The receipt of the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 3rd August 2021 was deferred until the next meeting.

21/159. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/160. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

21/161. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:55 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 2 SEPTEMBER 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	-	Bonus no longer being paid
Pavilion income	7,020.00	3,952.00	
Grant	300.00	164.00	
Other	60.00	875.05	Sale of 5 old streetlights
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,841.21	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	28,832.26	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	3,582.78	
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	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,400.00	6,705.90	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	2,004.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	67.95	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	2,127.47	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	900.00	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	3,000.00	
Neighbourhood Plan	-	90.00	
Revenue - Maintenance of Village sign	4,000.00	-	
Revenue - Maintenance of bus shelters	8,000.00	4,488.00	50% of estimate
Capital - Playground equipment	8,000.00	5,578.53	Cost less than expected
VAT	5,000.00	3,846.42	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	37,426.80	