

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 7th December 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 12 members of the public.

21/194. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs K Hamilton, Cllr Mrs J Liversage, 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).

21/195. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

21/196. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/197. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

As the final meeting of 2021, the Chair acknowledged the work undertaken by Cllrs and the Clerk as many of the Parish Council priorities were delivered in a challenging year, namely:

- bus shelters refurbished;
- street lighting replaced;
- village sign returned to its former glory;
- two major pieces of playground equipment were installed;
- installation of a roller shutter over the main Pavilion doors;
- work commenced on a long-term programme of tree maintenance;
- Neighbourhood Plan submitted to East Herts Council; and
- plans drawn up to extend the Burial Ground at Perry Green.

It was highlighted that this work was undertaken without increasing the precept.

The Chair thanked fellow Cllrs and the Clerk for their efforts.

21/198. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

21/199. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The following updates were provided in relation to outstanding matters and resolutions:

- bus shelter maintenance – quote for maintenance had been received. Agreed to accept the quote excluding the aspects relating to trimming foliage etc as this work was being undertaken by other contractors;
- Nature Reserve – back on the market at a very inflated price and an update from the selling agents has been requested;
- Legionnaires testing at the Pavilion – will be undertaken tomorrow;
- Village Sign – thanks were expressed to Cllrs D McDonald and K Twort for their work relating to the refurbishment and reinstallation of the Village Sign;
- tree maintenance – subject to clarifying whether a quick update of the tree survey was required, quotes to be obtained for the next phase of work;
Note – if a short walk round is required to update the tree survey, this is to be undertaken in conjunction with Cllr K Twort.
- Pavilion front door glazing – glazing the door behind the new roller shutter would be more difficult than expected and quotes are being sought;
- asset register – progress has been made on drafting an asset maintenance register; and
- CCTV at the Recreation Ground – quotes are expected following a recent meeting.

21/200. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

The Clerk confirmed that some minor works were still being completed at the Pavilion.

In terms of the playground, the Clerk reported that quotes are still being sought for the area in front of the basketball hoop and the latest quarterly maintenance report would be received shortly. The playground repairs agreed at the September meeting were being progressed.

The Chair highlighted that the tennis hut had been erected and drainage laid.

Village Hall

On behalf of Cllr Mrs K Hamilton, the Clerk reported that the Management Committee Chair had provided the following update:

- village hall usage had been improving with most groups having returned although some are meeting less often. The Drama Group had put on a fine performance recently. Other groups had been learning how to meet whilst keeping their members relatively safe and various family parties and social events had taken place;
- a decorator has been contracted to refresh the Main Hall and a quote requested for the replacement of the green curtains once the decorating has been completed;
- general maintenance is being organised: servicing of fire equipment and gas boilers, and electrical equipment (PAT) testing;
- financial position is currently sound but there is some concern about longer term prospects with the loss of income from the Recreation Trust; and
- the front of the Village Hall has been tidied: car parking lines repainted and the litter bin removed as requested by the Parish Council.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that with the move into Winter, the weather was deteriorating as was the quality of the surface of most footpaths and bridleways.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- Footpath 11 Diversion Order – still work in progress with the applicant's agents communicating with and gaining support from those residents who commented or opposed the planned diversion;
- extra trim – extra trim on the footpaths needing it had been completed but some would have vegetation cut back where hedges or tree branches get in the way of horse riders (e.g. Bridleway 51);
- Footpaths 13 and 39 + Bridleway 52 - landowners or farmers have been asked to reinstate paths that cross their fields; and
- bridge repairs:
 - Footpath 29 – emergency repairs to the main bridge completed in record time. Although the repairs are satisfactory, Herts County Council (HCC) are considering a major refurbishment of that bridge, the other minor bridge on that route and the surface of the path between them using funds from the COVID budget allocated to HCC this year;

- other bridges on Footpath 44 and Footpath 20 remain closed while repair work is undertaken. For Footpath 20, by the side of St Andrew's Church, the situation is complicated with many parties involved.

Finally, Cllr S Smith drew attention to an electronic monthly newsletter produced by the Countryside Management Service at HCC, entitled 'Countryside and Rights of Way'. Anyone can receive a copy of this e-Bulletin by choosing the 'update me' option on the HCC website.

Cllr B O'Neill stated that the suggestion of making Footpath 11 wheelchair accessible had been put forward to HCC but no feedback had been received as yet.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Cllr B O'Neill reported that the only remaining aspects of the street lighting project were the removal of the last column from Church Lane and the final survey of the completed work. At this stage, it is not certain when this will be undertaken as waiting on the contractor.

The Clerk highlighted that patching work had been undertaken in the hamlets in the previous week. It was also noted that patching works had been completed by the ford on the road to Little Hadham.

(iv) Media

None.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair reported that the appointed Independent Examiner had commenced work on the Neighbourhood Plan. The Examiner had issued "Guidance and Directions" detailing how the examination would be conducted and these are available on East Herts Council's (EHC) website and parish noticeboards.

The Chair also highlighted that the Examiner's intention is to conduct the examination through written representations and any contact with him is to be via EHC. The Examiner will also undertake an unaccompanied visit to the parish.

(vi) Security

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

- 4 specific crimes had been reported:
 - criminal damage to wheat and rape seed fields in Green Tye, believed to be from hare coursing;

- criminal damage to a window, causing it to shatter, of a High Street residential property, believed to have been caused by a BB gun or similar projectile;
- burglary in Danebridge Road where suspects gained entry to the rear of an unlocked residential property whilst works were being carried out and removed jewellery from within; and
- burglary at an outbuilding at a residential property in Much Hadham where two off-road bikes and one electric bike were stolen;
- residents are encouraged to join OWL, the communication system which supports Neighbourhood Watch; and
- the police are interested in details of local community events, no matter how small, so the Safer Neighbourhood Team can attend to engage with the community. Details of any such event can be provided to the Clerk to pass on.

(vii) Other

The Chair highlighted that a quote was being sought to refurbish the noticeboards throughout the parish as well as the two footpath maps.

21/201. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) had given his apologies for this meeting. There were no reports from either Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) or Cllr G McAndrew (HCC).

Although it was noted that the road sweeper had recently been in Much Hadham, Cllr B O'Neill had wanted to raise with Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) the need for the street sweeper to come again to collect fallen leaves as these block the drains and lead to flooding.

21/202. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

Note – comments relating to the planning application for dwellings behind The Bull Inn are detailed within the Planning Committee Minutes (Planning Committee Minutes ref: 21/122).

(i) Barn School site

In response to a resident's question, the Chair confirmed that there had been no contact with the developers of the Barn School site since an initial meeting nearly a year ago. At that initial meeting, the intentions for the Neighbourhood Plan had been discussed.

Cllr B O'Neill added that as some roof tiles had been falling from the building, the new owners had been contacted to address this.

(ii) Pavement and road sweeping

A resident highlighted that the pavements needed sweeping, adding that this should be undertaken after the leaves were all down and prior to the road being swept.

(iii) Land at Kettle Green Lane – Nature Reserve

Following a question from a resident, the Chair outlined the advertised prices for the land for sale at Kettle Green Lane. In addition, the Chair stated that other uses were not permitted on this land.

(iv) Street lighting

A number of residents raised concerns regarding the perceived lack of light at the bus stop on the corner of Ash Meadow and Tower Hill. Cllr B O'Neill stated that the removal of the street light from the bus stop column had been undertaken following three professional surveys. These surveys had concluded that sufficient light was provided by the streetlight round the corner in Ash Meadow and from the streetlight in front of the Londis shop.

Some residents consider that the streetlight should be reinstated as a matter of safety, particularly given that a number of elderly residents live in Ash Meadow.

Both the Chair and Cllr B O'Neill highlighted that a final walk round to assess the implementation of the streetlighting project, including the identification of any items that required rectifying, was still to be undertaken and any resident was welcome to be party to that.

21/203. STANSTED AIRPORT

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

21/204. CHARITY ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED to receive the 2020 accounts from the following local charities:

- Much Hadham Sports Association;
- Much Hadham Village Hall; and
- Parochial Charities – known as Much Hadham Almshouse Charity

The Chair commented that the COVID-related grants to the Village Hall and the Sports Association by East Herts Council had clearly been of benefit in supporting their financial position.

21/205. GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

The Chair highlighted that there were growing concerns about the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation within the local authority sector on councils, councillors and staff. In response, a Civility and Respect Project had been founded that is supported by representatives from Councils, County Associations and the National Association for Local Councils. The proposed Bullying and Harassment Policy is derived from this.

RESOLVED to approve the Parish Council's Bullying and Harassment Policy.

It was agreed that this would be displayed on the internal Village Hall noticeboard.

21/206. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - DECEMBER 2021

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP100	Home & Office Fire Extinguishers Ltd	Annual service	204.30
OP101	Mr C Copper	War Memorial maintenance	560.00
OP102	Sign of the Times:	Refurbished village sign	3,264.00
OP103	LPS Shutter Doors Ltd	Installation of roller shutter at Pavilion	2,112.00
OP104	Gooch Carpentry & Refurbishments Ltd	Oak post and installation of refurbished village sign	1,134.00
OP105	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (November)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (December)	334.00
OP106	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (December)	597.13
Total payments			<u>£8,285.43</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 A. No matters were highlighted by the Clerk.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 7 DECEMBER 2021

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2021	81,111.38	24,744.29	105,855.67
Income	82,752.45	2,220.00	84,972.45
Expenditure	- 60,648.14	- 918.71	- 61,566.85
Closing balance	<u>103,215.69</u>	<u>26,045.58</u>	<u>129,261.27</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>31,320.00</u>

(iii) Initial 2022/23 Budget and Forward Financial Plan

The Clerk highlighted that in the latest version of the initial 2022/23 Budget and Forward Financial Plan, circulated with the agenda, the precept had been restored to the same level as the current financial year. In terms of the earmarked funds, the balances were not forecast to be reducing in two specific instances:

- Section 106 monies - to date, the Parish Council has not made a formal decision to fund further playground equipment from these remaining funds; and
- Open spaces –currently the details of the tree maintenance activity is not known. When this is known and the expenditure included, the reserve will be reduced accordingly as the funding source.

Finally, the Clerk requested any further updates to the proposed financial plans by the end of 2021 as the 2022/23 Budget and Forward Financial Plan will be approved at the January 2022 meeting.

21/207. PLANNING

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

21/208. BURIAL AUTHORITY

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 5th October 2021 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

21/209. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/210. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- the latest East Herts Council engagement event with Town and Parish Councils had been attended on 30th November. Presentations included:
 - an introduction to the new “Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2027” which will be approved by East Herts full council next March;
 - a run through of the leisure projects that have been completed and in progress; and
 - an update on climate change and electric vehicle (EV) charging points which included latest figures as well as detailing the action East Herts is taking. As already known, EV charging infrastructure in rural areas is limited and apparently, feasibility work is starting with a range of interested parties.Slides are available to Cllrs if required.
- a reminder that the deadline to apply for an East Herts grant is the 4th January 2022. East Herts are looking for projects that strengthen the community and lead to improved health and wellbeing of residents and recovery after Covid. More details, including the application form, are available on East Herts website; and
- a further reminder that a unique celebration event is being held on Saturday 11th December, 11 am to 2 pm, to provide the local community with an opportunity to walk, jog or cycle along the A120 bypass before it becomes a public highway.

21/211. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 11th January 2022 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:21 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 7 DECEMBER 2021

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2022	2022	
	BUDGET £	ACTUAL £	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00	42,000.00	
PWLB Loan Advance (Parish lights)	-	25,000.00	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	4,272.66	
New Homes Bonus	9,097.00	-	Bonus no longer being paid
Pavilion income	7,020.00	6,386.00	
Grant	300.00	277.50	
Other	60.00	1,975.08	Sale of old streetlights
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,841.21	
TOTAL INCOME	67,752.00	82,752.45	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	5,374.17	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	5,387.46	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,768.00	-	First loan repayment will be in the next financial year
Administration costs	3,100.00	1,248.77	
Insurance	3,250.00	722.25	
Audit fees	830.00	745.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,400.00	7,661.11	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	3,006.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	700.00	664.17	
Street lighting (energy and maintenance)	2,000.00	-	
Pavilion	3,500.00	4,120.80	Additional maintenance work undertaken
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	3,665.00	Cost of refurbishing sign plus new post and installation
Revenue - Maintenance of bus shelters	8,000.00	10,439.09	£1,463.09 over approved quote of £8,976 due to additional cost of materials and labour, plus a pavement licence
Capital - Playground equipment	8,000.00	5,578.53	Cost less than expected
Capital - Roller shutter at Pavilion	-	1,760.00	
VAT	5,000.00	6,250.79	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,178.46	60,648.14	