

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council ANNUAL meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd May 2022, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7:30 pm.

*Cllr Mrs K Hamilton
*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)
Cllr Mrs J Liversage
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 6 members of the public.

22/66. ELECTION OF CHAIR

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

22/67. DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Cllr Mrs P Taylor duly signed her declaration of office.

22/68. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

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

22/69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs J Liversage, Cllr D McDonald and Cllr B O'Neill.

22/70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 22/82 (ii)) and would therefore not be participating in, nor voting on, the related motion.

Cllr K Twort declared an interest in any Neighbourhood Plan referendum discussions as the village boundary was being extended in the Neighbourhood Plan to include his property. In addition, Cllr K Twort sought a dispensation to participate in any referendum discussions but not vote in respect of any Neighbourhood Plan referendum decisions. The change in the village boundary to include his property was a small element of the overall Neighbourhood Plan and the inclusion of this property within the village boundary means it would be treated consistently with all other housing along the B1004 from New Barns Lane to Station

Road (with some exceptions). The property is currently in the rural area beyond the green belt, despite being in the centre of the village, which is anomalous.

RESOLVED to approve this dispensation.

No other declarations were made or applications for dispensations sought.

22/71. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

22/72. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and thanked fellow Cllrs for re-electing her as Chair as well as their support throughout the last year. In addition, the Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt, Vice Chair, for his help and expertise.

Highlighting that the Parish Council had benefitted from a steady group of Cllrs over the past few years, the Chair highlighted the following Cllrs' achievements:

- Cllr S Smith for the refurbishment of the two bus shelters;
- Cllrs D McDonald and K Twort for the refurbishment of the village sign;
- Cllr Mrs J Liversage for the creation of Remembrance Garden for ashes at Perry Green Burial Ground; and
- Cllr B O'Neill for the major project of renewal and updating of the village lighting prior to its handover to Herts County Council.

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer was also thanked for her efforts in relation to the production of the accounts for this meeting. The Chair highlighted the praise received from Internal Audit following the internal audit review.

The Chair reminded everyone that a vacancy still exists and if anyone is interested, further information can be obtained from the Clerk or existing Cllrs.

Finally, the Chair stated that the Parish Council was hosting the Annual Parish/Village meeting, with refreshments, at the Village Hall on Tuesday 17th May.

Groups/associations/committees/societies and village stake holders have been invited to attend a conference type event and residents will be able to circulate amongst the representatives at their tables, discovering what they have been doing recently, and any plans for the forthcoming year. This will be followed by a short formal meeting and an opportunity for "residents' comments", should there be any.

22/73. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 5th April 2022 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

22/74. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The report of outstanding matters and resolutions had been circulated with the agenda. The following updates were provided:

- litter bins – the Chair reported that as agreed, 5 litter bins had been removed. Consideration is to be given to moving a dog bin to Church Lane where a need had been identified at the last meeting. In addition, it was noted that the dog bin by Footpath 29 had been flattened recently. Cllr S Smith also highlighted that the litter bins on the Recreation Ground, especially near the Bowls Club, were always overflowing. The Chair agreed to check the emptying schedule with the litter picker;
- Asset of Community Value (ACV) nomination for The Bull Inn – Cllr I Hunt reported that the “Save The Bull” campaign group would be submitting the ACV in their name, as opposed to the Parish Council, and it was not yet clear whether the field behind the pub would be included or not;
- The Ley – nature reserve – Cllr I Hunt stated that this land had been purchased in its entirety by a local resident, apparently with the intention of retaining it as is. The purchase did not include the strip of land behind Nimney House;
- field between Broadfield Close and Footpath 11 – Cllr I Hunt reported that apparently another local resident had purchased this site;
- defibrillator – Cllr S Smith stated that he had undertaken research into the need, choice, acquisition (buying outright vs renting) and installation of a defibrillator, probably near or at the Pavilion. He hoped to have a proposal for the next meeting.

22/75. PORTFOLIOS, COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair reported that following consultation with Cllrs, the allocation of portfolios would remain unchanged. RESOLVED to approve the allocation of portfolios, detailed in Appendix A.

The Chair outlined the proposed 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.

The Chair outlined the proposed Parish Council representatives 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.

RESOLVED to approve the membership of Committees, including designation of Committee Chair and the Parish Council representatives on other bodies as outlined above.

The Chair commented that it had taken over a year to have the Neighbourhood Plan examined but it was now at the referendum stage, the date for which would be announced shortly. In addition, she reiterated her comment from last year - "The Steering Group is so nearly at the end of their task" – and expressed her thanks to the Steering Group for all their hard work and commitment to such an important project for the parish.

Finally, the Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt for his resolve, ambition, dedication and determination to the delivery of the Plan through to referendum. She highlighted it was now up to all the residents to see the advantages and protections the Plan will provide the village, and to vote for its inclusion into East Herts Council's statutory Development Plan.

22/76. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Cllr K Twort reported that the next meeting of the Sports Association was being held on the 5th May. In addition, it was reported that the contractor was investigating the heaters in the Pavilion to identify what other heating could be used. It was noted that the existing heaters were supposed to operate on sensors but this was not occurring in reality.

The Clerk commented that the Sports Association Chair was dealing with the renewal of the electricity contract, including obtaining comparative information.

The Chair reported that she was still chasing the installation of the cover for the roller shutter.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton reported that she had attended the Village Hall Management Committee AGM on the 12th April and provided a detailed update. The key points to note were:

- electrical work has been completed in the Green Room;

- the main hall re-decoration is still outstanding as difficulties are being encountered with contacting the contractor to agree the timing;
- an online booking system is being implemented;
- the financial position is currently sound;
- East Herts Council will help with the cost of 4 charging points for electric cars in the car park;
- the water heater in the Green Room kitchen is being replaced; and
- electrical testing completed, gas appliances checked, fire extinguishers checked as well as the fire alarm system.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that the dry spell had continued for April, possibly to the displeasure of gardeners and farmers but to the benefit of those seeking to enjoy the countryside without getting wet and muddy.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- Byway 46 and Footpath 20 - fallen trees have been cleared;
- Footpath 20 – permission received to extend closure of this footpath for a further 6 months and as yet, no update from the Herts County Council (HCC) Highways/Ringway project team for the replacement footbridge;
- Bridleway 52 - loose material had been placed in some of the worst of the potholes, but in at least one case it had been pulled out again, leaving large chunks of concrete sticking out – a trip hazard for walkers and horse riders. The Farm Manager agreed to resolve this latest issue, roll the other recent repairs to firm them up, and to install further material in other potholes. HCC pointed out that, while welcome, this would be a temporary solution as the route would deteriorate once again during bad weather and a more thorough resurfacing was required. Unfortunately, after a further inspection, the Farm Manager did not feel that his employers would be willing to agree to the repair expense, even though it would be more cost-effective in the medium to long term. Discussions are continuing on this issue;
- Bridleway 7 (Cox Lane) – it has been reported that another tree has apparently fallen on this bridleway but the current position is not known and will be reported at the next meeting.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

The Chair reported that attempts have been made to meet with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) and the Highways representative since February this year. Unfortunately, work on various projects in Much Hadham has ground to a halt, due to shortage of staff and lack of

resources. Apparently, the Highways Department current absolute priority is the delivery of schemes that are funded from the Highway Locality Budget across the County as a whole, which for Much Hadham, only covers the requested signage for Danebridge Road and the ford.

The Chair highlighted that the Kettle Green Lane passing places are again on the back burner, together with yellow lines at Hadham Cross, and replacement bollards at Moor Place entrance, not to mention the appalling state of Danebridge Road itself.

Finally, the Chair reported that frustration with HCC Highways had been expressed although it was noted that the lane through Green Tye had been top dressed, and effectively widened at various points, including Joyce's Corner. This is totally unexpected, but an improvement, however temporary, nonetheless.

Cllr S Smith reiterated that the number of potholes on the local roads are a serious issue.

(iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported that on successive days, three key messages relating to the upcoming referendum on the Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan had been posted on Facebook, Twitter and the local "Nextdoor" neighbourhood news feed.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr I Hunt provided an update on the Neighbourhood Plan and his report is attached at Appendix B. The salient points are:

- Steering Group activity – workshop was held to plan for the referendum, in particular promoting a favourable vote ahead of the date. Matters to include in positive messaging were identified and an article was included in the May parish magazine as well as a 3 day social media campaign (see Minute ref: 21/76 (iv)). Concern was expressed relating to the "Save the Bull" campaign – see below;
- Save The Bull campaign – a community group has been formed with the aim of ensuring The Bull thrives. However, at its launch meeting, it was asserted that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is the main threat to the pub's future. A number of incorrect facts are refuted including the threat to the pub's commercial viability, the impact of any building work on the pub and availability of the land behind Hill House. In addition, highlighting that if the Plan is not approved at the referendum, the protections for The Bull, the village and countryside in the Plan is lost;
- contact with Punch – a number of interactions with Punch have taken place, involving Cllrs and "Save The Bull" campaigners. Although there have been assurances from Punch safeguarding the future of The Bull, these have been ignored by the "Save The Bull" campaign. As Punch are likely to receive a windfall gain following planning approval, a request has been made by the Parish Council for a percentage of that to be invested back into the pub/community; and

- referendum – an official announcement regarding the referendum is expected from East Herts Council around the 12th May, with the referendum date expected to be the 23rd June. The referendum will be widely publicised once announced. If Cllrs agree, the Parish Council could distribute a flyer regarding The Bull.

Following discussion, it was agreed to distribute the flyer referred to above. In addition, it was made clear that once the referendum date is published, the Parish Council can not undertake any campaigning, but individual Cllrs can.

(vi) Security

The Clerk reported that a security report had not been received. However, the following points were made:

- the local Police team is now just PCSO Leon de Bruyn and PC Jack Culverhouse as PC Rob Wenham has moved to another area; and
- there is a free Older Persons Activity Learning and Safety (OPALS) event taking place on the 10th May at Albury Village Hall. The event is being run by Herts Fire and Herts Police and is offering safety information, help and advice for the older person and includes a free lunch and refreshments. Places need to be booked and help with transport can be obtained. Event has been posted on the Parish Council's social media pages.

The Chair mentioned the local event that had taken place in Much Hadham on the 30th April and she would ask PCSO Leon de Bruyn about it.

(vii) Stansted Airport

None.

(viii) Other

The Clerk confirmed that the tree quotes were being chased.

22/77. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) highlighted, as part of his upcoming Chairman's year, that the following events had been organised:

- Sunday 10th July – Civic Service at 6:30 pm at St Andrew's Church followed by refreshments outside; and
- Friday 23rd September – fund raising event for his nominated charity, the "Stroke Association", a Race Night at Henry Moore Foundation.

In addition, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) welcomed the news regarding The Ley and commented that, having spoken to the Head of Planning a number of times, he understood how much pressure she was under with the volume of applications, the staff turnover and the larger sites being dealt with.

Finally, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) mentioned that 4 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points were earmarked for installation at the Village Hall.

22/78. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Neighbourhood Plan

A resident expressed their concern that the views of the “Save The Bull” campaign had been misrepresented. Whilst recognising the legacy issues relating to the pub, in their view, the proposals from Punch would not help as these would not address the road through the carpark, the loss of outdoor space and the impact on the ambience. The campaign group hopes that the Parish Council will apply more pressure on Punch.

In addition, the resident reiterated their view that the land behind Hill House was known of early enough to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. Equally, the resident considered it was misleading for the Parish Council publicity to state that not approving the Neighbourhood Plan would provide free rein to developers. In their view, the National Planning Policy Framework and the District Plan policies were sufficient.

In terms of the land behind Hill House, Cllr I Hunt rebutted the resident’s assertion that this could have been a site allocation. In Summer 2020, the site was being marketed on behalf of the executors and no developers were involved to talk to. The Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to East Herts Council (EHC) in February 2021. EHC started its consultation in March 2021, the month prior to the new owner of the land contacting the Parish Council. That was the first contact with the developer, well after the Plan had been submitted.

(ii) Jubilee Party

Following a query from a resident, the Chair confirmed that the Parish Council had applied for part of the main road through Much Hadham to be closed for a Jubilee party but this had been turned down. In addition, the Chair stated that a request had been made in the Parish Magazine for volunteers to establish a Committee to organise a party but nobody came forward. Finally, the Chair commented that she was aware that other groups in the village were doing something, for instance, the WI.

22/79. CHARITY ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED to receive the 2021 accounts from the following local charities:

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

It was noted that whilst the current financial position of the charities was sound, the fact that the Fete was no longer being held would affect this in the future.

The Chair expressed thanks to those involved in managing these charities.

22/80. 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, 2021/22, and the conclusion was that the Parish Council had the expected controls in place and no recommendations were made. Page 3 of the AGAR 2021/22, 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 2021 to March 2022 had been reviewed and no issues had been identified. This review underpins the Annual Governance Statement for the last financial year which is part of the next agenda item.

RESOLVED to approve the review of effectiveness of internal controls for 2021/22.

22/81. 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, as reflected by the review of effectiveness approved under item 22/80(ii).

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22, 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.

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.

Cllr I Hunt reported that he had reviewed the financial accounts in some detail. They had been produced to a high standard and thanked the Clerk.

In response to a question, the Clerk explained the work undertaken to restate some of the valuations in the fixed assets register that supports the financial statements.

RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements, Section 2 in the AGAR and the detailed Financial Accounts for 2021/22.

(iii) Period for the exercise of public rights

The Clerk stated that the period for the exercise of public rights would be Wednesday 1st June to Thursday 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.

22/82. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

The Clerk highlighted that the reference numbering for payments on the agenda had gone out of alignment (corrected below) and should have been from OP143 to OP149. In addition, she highlighted that a Direct Debit would need to be put in place with nPower for the war memorial lighting. These bills are not paid within the 14 days requested, given the timing of Parish Council meetings, and nPower's payment chasing starts promptly. This would be on the June agenda for approval.

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not participate in this item or vote due to his declared interest. (Minute ref: 22/70)

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - MAY 2022

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP143	BA ICCM	Membership fee relating to cemetery management	95.00
OP144	Npower	Lighting for war memorial	59.80
OP145	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	701.42
OP146	MH Sports Association	Grass cutting at Recreation Ground	1,800.00
OP147	Ian Hunt	Zoom for virtual meetings	107.90
OP148	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (April)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (May)	334.00
DD	PWLB	Loan repayment (Pavilion)	2,693.73
OP149	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (May)	607.53
Total payments			<u>£6,479.38</u>

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

(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 C. The Clerk highlighted that the first half of this year's precept (£21,000) had been received since issuing the statement.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 3 MAY 2022

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2022	44,158.77	29,970.81	74,129.58
Income	17,140.55	-	17,140.55
Expenditure	- 11,131.48	- 95.00	- 11,226.48
Closing balance	<u>50,167.84</u>	<u>29,875.81</u>	<u>80,043.65</u>

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

(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation	1,570.00
(2) Open spaces	18,650.00
	<u>20,220.00</u>

22/83. PLANNING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5th April 2022 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

22/84. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 5th April 2022 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

22/85. STAFFING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 24th March 2022 be received and the decisions taken be ratified.

RESOLVED to approve an increase in the Clerk's hours by 2 hours per week, with effect from 14th March 2022 (additional per annum financial cost of £1,460)

22/86. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

22/87. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

22/88. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:50 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 sign, 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		Stewart Smith
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		Jan Liversage

22/76 (v) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPORT – MAY 2022

1. Steering Group activity

A NP Workshop was held on 14 April to plan for the referendum, in particular promoting a favourable vote ahead of the announcement of a date for it. Positive messages should include the preservation of the environment (green spaces, priority views, historic heritage etc) together with sustainable housing on sites within walking distance of village facilities.

Concern was expressed that the nascent Save The Bull campaign had leafletted the village with an unsubstantiated opinion that development would make The Bull unviable and the “probability” that Punch Taverns would then sell off the pub as a house. I’ll talk more about The Bull in a moment. With regard to the referendum, it was agreed social media messaging should be devised, possibly incorporating the original message of Your Village (or Parish), Your Plan.

Consequently, the May issue of the parish magazine carries a full page summarising the positive benefits of the Plan, the consequences of a No vote and encouraging electors to vote. A preview of the article was emailed to the NP mailing list. A 3-day campaign on social media promoted the referendum and I’m grateful to Martin Adams for creating the campaign material and to Cllr Stewart Smith for managing the activity on Facebook, Twitter and Next Door.

2. Save The Bull campaign

A community group has been formed with the aim of ensuring The Bull thrives. Nothing wrong with that and worthy of our support in principle, you would think. Ordinarily, this wouldn’t be a topic for this section of the meeting.

Regrettably, the campaign’s management team began its launch meeting on 28 April by asserting that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is the main threat to the pub’s future. You will recall that it proposes limited development of 5/6 small bungalows for elderly people on the unused field behind it. They told the meeting that they had previously asked the PC to withdraw The Bull site and consider replacing it with the land at Hill House. This assertion that the NP is a primary threat to the future of The Bull, which was made without any supporting evidence, needs to be rebutted because the inference is that campaign management are considering calling for a vote against the Plan. Unfortunately, I was not permitted to speak on that particular matter at the campaign’s launch so let me provide the facts for the record:

FACT 1. As most residents know, The Bull’s real problems are legacy issues of under-investment, inconsistent food quality, frequent changes of landlord etc. Whatever commercial difficulties the pub currently faces, the NP is not yet in force and therefore

cannot be the cause of those problems. If the campaign focuses on the long-running problems, it has more chance of succeeding.

FACT 2. The Neighbourhood Plan specifically requires that building work must not interfere with the pub's operations. The developer will have to work around the needs of the pub and its customers, not the other way around.

FACT 3. If the Neighbourhood Plan is not approved at referendum, that's it – it's gone, along with every one of the new protections it creates for The Bull, our village and countryside. There is neither money nor resources for more years of consultations. Without the Neighbourhood Plan and the limited sites it allocates for housing, developers will have free rein to promote their preferred sites all around the village boundary.

FACT 4. The Save The Bull campaign management claim there is the possibility of development behind Hill House. They overlook to mention this would involve construction of a twin carriageway access road and pavement Tarmacking 200m of verdant countryside to reach any new estate, a junction on Tower Hill just yards from the school entrance and at least 30 new houses. No residents asked for this at any stage of the Plan's consultations. It would mean more congestion, more disruption and, overall, at least 25 houses more than required in the heart of the village.

3. Contact with Punch

Steering group member Michael Byrne and I attended a video call with the campaign's representatives and a senior executive from Punch's property management function on 20 April. There has also been correspondence with Punch, which was shared with the campaign management, and a further meeting in the Pavilion, which didn't include Punch.

Despite Punch very specifically telling us all that they are "committed to keeping the pub as a pub and have no plans to see it redeveloped into a dwelling" and that they would be "supportive of an ACV to ensure this was the case", the campaign management chooses to disregard these assurances. Punch's property executive confirmed that the pub and its car park would remain open and operational throughout any building work, echoing what all our experts and independent consultants have said.

It is likely that the windfall gain to Punch following planning approval would exceed £1m so in the course of these exchanges with Punch I have also requested that a percentage of the windfall gain be invested back into the community by, for example, investing in the pub and the village hall and so on. That remains under consideration by Punch.

4. Referendum

I am told EHC will publish on or before 12 May the official announcement of the referendum date, expected to be 23 June.

The referendum date will be widely promoted, of course, once announced, but the consequence of the Save The Bull campaign's misplaced focus on the neighbourhood plan is that time, energy and resources will have to be put into rebutting its false claims so that residents are not confused in the run up to the referendum. Already, I have been contacted by a reporter at the Bishop's Stortford Independent for my thoughts on development behind The Bull (presumably, there will be an article in tomorrow's edition).

Regarding actions the parish council can take now, with the agreement of councillors I propose that a flyer be distributed to every house in the village setting out the facts I recited earlier, to counter the misinformation about The Bull, the consequence of a "No" vote etc etc.

IH 3 May 2022

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 3 MAY 2022

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2023	2023	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00		
Litter Agency	4,275.00		
Pavilion income	9,660.00	780.00	
Grant	300.00		
Other	60.00	0.27	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	16,360.28	
TOTAL INCOME	61,295.00	17,140.55	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	1,339.86	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	2,693.73	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,734.64	1,367.32	
Administration costs	2,960.00	900.01	
Insurance	2,650.00	831.60	
Audit fees	850.00	-	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	-	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,000.00	1,850.00	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	668.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	805.00	77.67	
Pavilion	4,000.00	1,253.02	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00		
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-		
Neighbourhood Plan	-		
Capital - Playground equipment	5,000.00		
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	10,000.00		
VAT	5,000.00	150.27	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	58,630.10	11,131.48	