

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd August 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 1 member of the public.

22/125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs P Taylor. In the absence of Cllr Mrs P Taylor, Cllr I Hunt chaired the meeting.

22/126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

22/127. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

22/128. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair referred to the recent announcement of the closure of the adult care home at St Elizabeth's and the need to re-house over 80 highly vulnerable residents by the end of November. He highlighted that the announcement followed a poor inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and admission by the Trustees that they did not have, and could not recruit, sufficient suitably trained staff to turn it around.

In addition, the Chair highlighted that although the Trustees stated they would continue to operate as a residential school and college supporting children and young people with epilepsy and other complex conditions, this was a huge concern not only for the families of those affected but also the employees who may be made redundant as a consequence.

The Chair stated that it was not an issue that the Parish Council could get involved with, as it was a matter for the appropriate authorities to provide assistance. However, it was a matter that would be kept under review and if any information came to the Parish Council's attention, it would be passed on to either the regulators or the Trustees.

In discussion, it was recognised that the safety of residents was the primary concern and highlighted that a campaign to stop the closure had been started. In addition, it was noted that Julie Marson, MP, had reported she was liaising with St Elizabeth's on this matter.

22/129. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

22/130. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Clerk provided the following updates on outstanding matters and resolutions:

- it had been identified when posting the agendas that the noticeboards had been refurbished;
- the Asset of Community Value nomination for "The Ley" has to be re-submitted, due to the sale a few months ago, and this would be done in the next week or so;
- an installation date for the defibrillator at the Pavilion was anticipated in the next week or so given that the payment had been made. The potential for additional volunteers for the "weekly reporting" to be revisited once the installation has been completed; and
- the dog bin, to replace the demolished one near Footpath 29, should have arrived a few weeks ago but the company have had some production delays. The new bin is now expected by the end of next week.

The Chair highlighted that the success, or otherwise, of the removal of some litter bins from around the village at the start of the year would be considered at the September meeting.

22/131. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Pavilion

Cllr D McDonald reported that the existing agreement with Faraway Tree Kindergarten, for the regular hire of the Pavilion, ends on the 5th October and the Kindergarten do want to renew the agreement. The Kindergarten are currently closed for the summer and a meeting has been arranged with the owner, for the 15th August, to discuss a number of issues that have arisen recently. This meeting will be attended by Cllr D McDonald and Cllrs Mrs P Taylor.

Recreation Ground

Cllr K Twort that there had been no recent Sports Association meetings.

Cllr Mrs J Liversage reported that she would be meeting with Cllr Mrs P Taylor to progress the new noticeboard for the Recreation Ground on the 23rd August.

Village Hall

Cllr Mrs K Hamilton provided an update from the recent Village Hall Management Committee meeting. The salient points were:

- the Village Hall Chair has been working on the new online booking system and anticipates placing an advert for an Administrator/Bookings Secretary in September. Booking requests can be emailed if users struggle with the online booking system;
- the Green Room wall has been repaired and the Main Hall decoration work is due to commence on the 15th August for a period of 2 weeks. Once this is completed, the new side curtains will be hung;
- fixed wiring work has been completed and emergency lights are being replaced;
- the financial position is sound and 2 additional Committee members have been set up for online banking;
- updated risk assessment policies were considered and approved. It had been noted that fire doors had been left open by hirers recently;
- appointment made to the role of Health and Safety Officer;
- the conditions of hire for the hall will be updated and distributed to all users. This will highlight requirements in terms of the use of ladders, brought in electrical equipment and the location of the Accident Book;
- consideration will be given to purchasing an automatic door opener/closer as it has been highlighted that access to the Hall was difficult for wheelchair users; and
- a reminder of the following fund raising events:
 - Ceilidh and music on Sunday 28th August at the Village Hall, with proceeds being split between the Hall and Ukraine; and
 - Much Hadham Recreation Trust's outdoor movie night: Saturday 17th September, showing "Grease".

It was noted, following discussion, that there were no implications for the Parish Council (excluding as a user) in respect of health and safety matters at the Village Hall as these are the responsibility of the Management Committee.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that July was a very dry month with no rain to speak of and, luckily, no fire related incidents which have caused concerns in other parts of the Southeast with devastating effect. In addition, he noted that the foliage had been trimmed back on some of the country lanes which has improved visibility for motorists.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- the first round of cutting back and trimming undergrowth on footpaths and bridleways was now complete. The second phase will commence mid-way through August when the cycle starts all over again. In the meantime, should any resident feel an urgent need for a footpath or bridleway to receive treatment, whether on the contractor's schedule or not, then please contact him;
- for the Footpath 11 diversion, agents for the residents are discussing small changes to the route with Herts County Council (HCC), and have agreed in principle with the installation of a barrier at the point where the footpath crosses Kettle Green Lane, with details currently being finalised;
- a fallen tree on Footpath 38 is being cleared and a way marker post on Footpath 13 will be replaced by HCC's contractor this week; and
- there is no progress update for the Footpath 20 bridge repair except to say that HCC Highways are proceeding with the case. Apparently, the design of the new bridge is fairly complex and the final solution will require acceptance from the Environment Agency and a couple of utility companies as their pipework and cabling are part of the bridge's structure. The timing of the installation also has to take into account the trout spawning season.

In response to Cllr B O'Neill's query, Cllr S Smith stated there was no news regarding whether the steepness on Footpath 11 was being reduced. In addition, it was not clear who was involved in the discussions referred to.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Cllr S Smith stated that he had reported to Herts County Council Highways, with suitable photographs, the clear examples of trees and branches littering the roadside which he considered represented a danger to motorists and cyclists where they were. He also highlighted his own personal experience recently with tyre blow outs on the B1004.

Cllr S Smith also provided further details on the East Herts Council initiative that invites residents to adopt an area in their parish to regularly litter pick. East Herts Council will provide high vis jackets, bags and picking tools to those who are interested. He noted that he had signed up for his immediate area although had been regularly litter picking there anyway.

In discussion, it was noted that the roads are not being properly surfaced and the sunken gully just below Snells Corner needed to be reported again.

The Chair queried the position regarding street lighting and the Clerk confirmed that the Section 270 agreement would be put in place once the snagging work had been completed. She reiterated that the Parish Council, since April 2022, was not paying the energy and

maintenance costs for the street lights. Cllr B O'Neill stated that an outstanding item was the delivery of an old column to the Forge Museum.

(iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported that the following posts had been made on social media since the last meeting:

- adopt an area for litter picking;
- Village Hall's Far & Wide Charity Fund Raising Ceilidh (28th August); and
- Herts & Essex Country Fair at Brent Pelham (21st August)

In addition, Cllr S Smith stated that he and Cllr Mrs P Taylor would be looking at improvements to the Parish Council's website.

The Chair commented that the Neighbourhood Plan website had now been closed, and appropriate updates relating to the Plan on the Parish Council's website had been made by the Clerk.

(v) Security

Cllr Mrs J Liversage provided the following update based on information from OWL and PCSO Leon de Bruyn:

- 13th July – residential burglary in Allen's Green where valuables were taken and the suspects left in unknown direction by means unknown and
- early July – vehicle damaged, but suspect unknown and left in an unknown direction.

Finally, Cllr Mrs J Liversage reminded those present that for all non-emergency matters, call 101.

(vi) Stansted Airport

Cllr D McDonald reported that he was still waiting for the changes which Stansted Airport propose to make to flights paths to be announced.

(vii) Other

The Bull

The Chair highlighted that prior to the Neighbourhood Plan referendum, Punch's agents had submitted a pre-application planning proposal for development behind The Bull, very largely along the lines of the indicative plan that featured in the Plan itself.

Following the referendum result, Punch's agents pressed East Herts Council (EHC) for a pre-app discussion and, very unusually, invited the Chair to represent the Parish Council in the Zoom meeting on the 19th July. One purpose of the pre-app discussion is to identify what problematic planning issues might arise if an application were to be submitted and identify ways in which the proposal might be adapted to make it more acceptable. Pre-app discussions are informal and non-binding and, as they involve commercial considerations, are not normally in the public domain. Consequently, the details of what was discussed will not be provided to this meeting.

However, the Chair stated that the EHC's Conservation Unit largely led the discussion and had previously already had a preliminary exchange of correspondence with Punch's agents, who, including their architect, were quite willing to take on board the suggestions being made. This was very encouraging as a key requirement is that the development preserves and enhances the special interest, character and appearance of this historic area. Attention to design detail is critical in this.

The Chair highlighted that he was able to advise the pre-app meeting that a requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan for a development of this size was that the developers must engage with the community on their proposals ahead of submitting a planning application. This was an important benefit of the Plan, perhaps not fully appreciated previously – residents will get to see the plans and provide feedback before the formal consultation via EHC takes place.

In parallel with progress towards a planning application, the Chair highlighted that Punch and the landlord, had been working on proposals to reinvest some of the development profit in upgrading the internal facilities (kitchen, bar area, toilets etc). He had suggested that the community engagement required for the development be extended to include a presentation of the internal proposals too, so that residents can see the project in its entirety. Punch readily agreed to this and what form this might take is being discussed. One suggestion was a day long display in The Bull attended by Punch where residents can drop in to view and discuss the plans.

This was a step change in how developers engage with the community and was entirely due to the powers in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Finally, the Chair highlighted the need to recognise that companies and their personnel change so there is a need to avoid any backsliding from Punch: it would be best if this internal work was undertaken as soon as possible once planning permission had been granted. Using local planning and legal expertise, how best to capture the promise of upgraded facilities internally within the planning permission for external development was being considered. For example, it might be made a planning condition that prior to first occupancy of any dwelling, the internal upgrades must have been completed. It was noted that it is not straightforward in legal or planning terms to design these conditions and so discussions continue, fortunately in a spirit of mutual co-operation. Councillors will be advised of further progress as and when available.

In discussion, Cllrs noted that it would be useful if there was a mechanism for the Parish Council to see any comments gathered from residents by Punch on its plans so it could ensure that they are subsequently properly addressed. In addition, it was highlighted that having the plans available earlier than just on one day would allow for a better consultation, as would having a model of what the development would look like in reality. Finally, it was agreed that ensuring compliance with planning conditions would need to be robust.

22/132. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Neither Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) nor Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) were present therefore there were no reports.

Cllr D McDonald highlighted that, when the opportunity arose, he intended to ask Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) what action was being taken to make the roads safer for cyclists.

22/133. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) The Bull Inn

A resident expressed gratitude for the update regarding The Bull Inn (Minute ref: 131 (vii)), especially for the work being done to have certain actions conditioned as part of any planning approval.

In addition, the resident highlighted that the "Save The Bull Campaign Group" would like to be involved in any consultation on the engagement process and noted that the Group had been having discussions with Punch too.

(ii) Litter picking

A resident commented that when a person adopts an area for litter picking, the person can specify the roads that they want to do. The resident also suggested that a local group could be established to ensure that most of the parish is covered.

Cllr S Smith noted that the Perry Green & Green Tye Preservation Society organise regular litter picking in the hamlets, as does Bishops Stortford.

22/134. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

The Clerk highlighted that two payments had been made after the last meeting:

- payment to Country Garden Care Landscaping Ltd for the work undertaken at the entrance to St Andrew's Burial Ground for £650, in line with the approved quote; and
- following approval of Cllrs via email, as the payment was greater than £1,000, £2,928 was paid to the Community Heartbeat Trust to progress the installation of the defibrillator at the Pavilion.

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - AUGUST 2022

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
DD	Npower	Lighting for war memorial	46.53
OP171	CPRE	Annual membership	36.00
OP172	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	349.35
OP173	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External audit 2021/22	480.00
OP174	CDA Herts	Annual membership	36.00
OP175	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (Jul)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (Aug)	334.00
OP176	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Aug)	729.04
Total payments			<u>2,090.92</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 2022/23 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 2 AUGUST 2022

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2022	44,158.77	29,970.81	74,129.58
Income	45,538.50	565.00	46,103.50
Expenditure	- 23,914.53	- 2,036.41	- 25,950.94
Closing balance	<u>65,782.74</u>	<u>28,499.40</u>	<u>94,282.14</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>

(iii) Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021/22

The Clerk reported that PKF Littlejohn, the Parish Council's external auditors, had completed their audit of the Parish Council's AGAR and issued their opinion on the 20th July. It was an unqualified opinion and no other matters were raised. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was published on the 28th July and was available on the Parish Council's website and notice boards.

The Clerk also reported that the timetable for next year's audit would be similar but that PKF Littlejohn may not be the Parish Council's external auditor. The audit contract for the next 5 years was arranged last December but the audit appointment notifications were not being issued until the 2021/22 audits had been concluded.

22/135. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5th July 2022 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

22/136. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

22/137. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported that as the minutes needed to be retained indefinitely, the best format for retention was in bound volumes. To that end, she had organised for the binding of the following minutes:

- Parish Council minutes from July 2014 to the end of 2021 (4 indexed volumes); and
- Planning Committee minutes from August 2014 to the end of 2018 (1 indexed volume).

In addition, the Clerk highlighted that the intention was to make getting minutes bound a more regular task. She noted that there should be sufficient “paper” to get the Burial Authority minutes and some more Planning minutes bound next year.

Finally, the Clerk stated that all of the minutes that had been sent for binding were available electronically, with majority being accessible on the website. In due course, the bound volumes would be deposited at the Herts County Council Archive.

22/138. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 6th September 2022 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall, with refreshments beforehand from 7:00 pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 2 AUGUST 2022

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2023	2023	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	42,000.00	21,000.00	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	4,884.58	
Pavilion income	9,660.00	3,120.00	
Grant	300.00	172.00	
Other	60.00	1.64	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	16,360.28	
TOTAL INCOME	61,295.00	45,538.50	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	3,854.12	
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	1,124.84	
Insurance	2,650.00	1,337.13	
Audit fees	850.00	845.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	-	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,000.00	3,703.09	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	1,670.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	805.00	121.98	
Pavilion	4,000.00	2,123.40	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	-	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Neighbourhood Plan	-	1,000.00	
Capital - Playground equipment	5,000.00	-	
Capital - Defibrillator	-	2,440.00	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	10,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	1,633.92	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	58,630.10	23,914.53	