

## **MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7:30 pm.

Cllr B Bird  
\*Cllr K Hamilton  
\*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)  
\*Cllr J Liversage  
Cllr D McDonald

\*Cllr B O'Neill  
Cllr S Smith  
\*Cllr P Taylor (Chair)  
\*Cllr K Twort

\* denotes present

In attendance: F Forth, Clerk and 2 members of the public.

### **22/189. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllrs B Bird, D McDonald and S Smith.

### **22/190. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

None.

### **22/191. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **22/192. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair reported that the work on the trees at the Recreation Ground and Perry Green had been undertaken today.

In addition, despite what had been reported in the Parish Magazine, the defibrillator training dates are now Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January at 10 am and Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January at 7 pm. Both training events are at the Pavilion and new posters detailing the training would be put up around the village. If anyone wants to attend this training, please let Cllr S Smith know.

### **22/193. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

## 22/194. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair reported that the report had not been circulated as very little had changed. The work relating to the benches for the asset register was in progress and the tree works, as stated earlier, were done on the 6<sup>th</sup> December.

## 22/195. MEMBERS' REPORTS

### (i) Community

#### Playground

The Clerk explained that the physical site visit for the ROSPA inspection report had been undertaken towards the end of July when it was extremely hot and a number of issues had arisen as a result – erosion, loose fittings etc. Most of the playground items were assessed as low or very low risk. There is one moderate risk item, the activity trail, due to the impact of the hot weather, the “old logs” lying nearby (displaced when the new play equipment was installed in 2021) and some posts needing replacement as identified by Broadmead Leisure. In addition, the Clerk highlighted that a check was needed to ensure that the tree works being undertaken will lift the tree canopy in this area. Finally, the Clerk stated that the ROSPA report had been passed to Broadmead Leisure so that their next quarterly inspection, for which the report is due soon, will provide a clearer indication of work required.

In terms of the Broadmead Leisure report, a number of maintenance items have been identified which Broadmead Leisure will be instructed to action.

#### Pavilion

The Chair reported that Cllr D McDonald and herself had met with the former owner of Faraway Tree Kindergarten Ltd to discuss the final handover. A final clean had been completed and a number of items were to be taken away, with the mini oven being left for the Parish Council.

In addition, the Chair highlighted that discussions were in progress for with a potential long term hirer of the Pavilion.

#### Recreation Ground

The Chair stated that the review of the funding arrangements for the Sports Association were continuing. Cllr D McDonald was in the process of collecting relevant information.

#### Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton reported that the next Village Hall meeting was taking place on 18<sup>th</sup> January.

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

General

On behalf of Cllr S Smith, the Clerk commented that the heavy rainfall and fallen leaves had been responsible for many flooded areas around the village with Widford Road by the Jolly Waggoners and Danebridge Road being the worst hit. The former, with sunken drain cover, was a particularly dangerous spot to be avoided by both motorists and pedestrians.

In addition, it was reported that the 50-odd tyres dumped in the river by the side of Danebridge Road, previously retrieved and placed by the roadside by the Environment Agency, had at last been removed by them completely. The delay in doing so had simply been because they had to identify somewhere to take them to.

Public Rights of Way

On behalf of Cllr S Smith, the Clerk provided the following update:

- Footpath 11 diversion: the Parish Council were notified that a fresh proposal has been drawn up to take care of the steep gradient on the footpath where it meets Kettle Green Lane on the southside. A diagram of the path and recommended distances to ensure a gradient of 1 in 12, plus the positioning of suitable barriers to prevent anyone rushing across the road, had been distributed to all Cllrs. A short informal consultation period will now commence and, if nothing too crucial is discovered, the proposal will enter a formal consultation period; and
- Footpath 29: both bridges have been repaired, but the environment team at HCC considered their action as a temporary measure. They are seeking a more robust permanent repair/replacement job to avoid what has become an annual repair event.

In response to a question, Cllr I Hunt confirmed that footpath diversions are not a planning matter although it was noted that planning applications are refused if intended to build on a PRoW.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

The Chair reported that the meeting with Highways, planned for the 8<sup>th</sup> November, did not take place. An update on outstanding matters, at this stage, is being pursued by email.

Cllr B O'Neill reported that concerns had been raised with drivers using Station Road and Windmill Way when the main road had been closed recently. This had been reported on the Highways fault reporting system, highlighting that Highways should fix the increased potholes in Station Road as a result of this additional traffic.

(iv) Media

On behalf of Cllr S Smith, the Clerk reported that work is still progressing regarding the refreshment of the Parish Council website.

(v) Security

Based on information from OWL messaging and that provided by PCSO Leon de Bruyn, Cllr J Liversage highlighted the following reported crimes:

- 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> November: burglary in Bourne Lane, at a Livery yard, resulting in the theft of horse rugs, but leaving behind tack and other equestrian equipment;
- 16<sup>th</sup> /17<sup>th</sup> November: child's dirt bike taken from residential property in Perry Green; and
- 17<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> November: power tools were stolen from a shed at a residential property.

In addition, OWL advice reminds everyone to be careful when using candles during this festive time.

Cllr J Liversage provided the following feedback from attending the East Herts Police priority setting for rural areas meeting:

- crime figures were slightly up from the third quarter period: June to August 2022;
- total crimes reported for September to November 2022 were 384, up by 10; and
- focus for preventative work for the next 3 months was discussed, noting that fly tipping, speeding through villages and theft from rural businesses are all still a concern.

Finally, Cllr J Liversage stated that individuals are urged to create barriers to theft by using cameras, marking of property/equipment and reporting crime when it occurs using 101 or the on line police reporting system ([www.Police.uk](http://www.Police.uk)).

**The reporting of crime is vital to ensure that resources are deployed effectively to the areas that are most vulnerable.**

Where cars are involved members of the public are urged to take photos of the car number plate and report this to the police for more effective investigation and action. Everyone was reminded to report all non-emergency matters via 101.

(vi) Stansted Airport

None.

(vii) Other

Nature Reserve Asset of Community Value (ACV)

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the ACV application could not be re-submitted until the title number of the Nature Reserve land was known. Cllr D McDonald was pursuing this.

The Bull Inn consultation

Cllr I Hunt reported that, as previously promised, Punch Taverns had held a consultation event, on the afternoon/evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> November, to outline its plans for the refurbishment of the pub as well as the latest designs for the 6 properties in the back field. It was noted that the external design of the properties was similar to the almshouses.

Punch Taverns had sought feedback from attendees on its plans and the Parish Council had requested a summary of this information. It is expected that a new planning application for the site will come forward in due course.

In discussion, it was highlighted that there was no mechanism to prevent young people from purchasing one of the properties. However, the intention would be to request that the properties are covenanted for older people but this may not happen.

Neighbourhood Plan action points for the Parish Council

Cllr I Hunt reported that East Herts Council had adopted Much Hadham's Neighbourhood Plan on the 16<sup>th</sup> November. In addition, he highlighted that at the last meeting, in response to a resident's comment, he had agreed that the action points for the Parish Council, included in the Neighbourhood Plan, would be considered and prioritised at this meeting. However, it was now apparent that this would be a significant piece of work and he would report further at a future meeting.

Hadham Hopper

The Chair reported that Herts County Council is working on a solution to replace the Hadham Hopper and it is hoped that the Parish Council will be consulted once further details are known.

22/196. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

## 22/197. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

### (i) Malting Lane hedges

A resident highlighted that 1 property hedge in Malting Lane is particularly bad in terms of jutting into the Lane which will be reported on Highways fault reporting. The Chair stated that she would try and talk to the homeowner as well.

### (ii) Neighbourhood Plan

Given the planning appeal in progress for Old Station Yard, a resident commented that this would be a good test of the policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that the Planning Committee would be considering the Parish Council's response to this planning appeal at its meeting that evening.

### (iii) Fly tipping

The Estate Manager for a local landowner commented that they were actively trying to prevent access to the land in order to limit fly tipping and other illegal activities.

### (iv) Floodlights (LED lighting)

A resident reported that floodlights on the corner of a house not far from the Village Hall were dangerous, stating that such lighting can obscure a person's night vision, making it dangerous for drivers, as well as being bad for the environment. The Chair agreed to highlight this issue in the next Parish Magazine.

### (v) Pavement from Spindle Bridge to the Lordship

The inaccessibility of the pavement from Spindle Bridge to The Lordship was highlighted by a resident. It was noted that this was a matter to report to East Herts Council (EHC) and, following the last meeting, the Chair agreed to make a fault report on the EHC website, and forward it to Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) for his assistance.

## 22/198. UNITY TRUST BANK

The Chair highlighted that to improve the resilience of the Parish Council's financial processes, it was proposed that there should be a backup Cllr who can access the bank account and set up payments in the event of a prolonged absence of the Clerk.

In addition to amending the bank mandate, the Financial Regulations needed to be updated, specifically para 6.15 (amendments in bold):

- 6.15 Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk [RFO] **and a nominated councillor** shall be appointed as the Service Administrators. **The nominated Cllr will act as a backup in the event of the unavailability or incapacity of the Clerk [RFO].** The bank mandate approved by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts. The bank mandate will state clearly the amounts of payments that can be instructed by the use of the Service Administrator alone, or by the Service Administrator with a stated number of approvals. **The councillor mandated as the additional Service Administrator cannot also be mandated to authorise transactions.**

RESOLVED to:

- amend Financial Regulation 6.15 to enable a nominated Cllr to act as a back up to Clerk in the event of the unavailability or incapacity of the Clerk; and
- add Cllr P Taylor to the Unity Trust Bank mandate to “view the account and submit payments”.

#### 22/199. CCLA DEPOSIT ACCOUNT: MUCH HADHAM RECREATION GROUND

The Chair reported that the Clerk had circulated a paper regarding the CCLA Deposit Account: Much Hadham Recreation Ground explaining the origin of this account. This had been prompted by CCLA as they were seeking an updated bank mandate for this account.

To update the bank mandate, a minimum of 2 Cllrs is required, with the Clerk being named as the correspondent.

In due course, the intention will be to close this account and transfer the funds to the Sports Association with the caveat that the funds are used for the purpose of maintaining the Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED to:

- nominate and approve the following two Cllrs to be signatories on this account, with the Clerk being the correspondent:
  - Cllr I Hunt; and
  - Cllr K Twort; and
- approve, in due course, the closure of this account with the funds being transferred to the Sports Association.  
Note: caveats for the Sports Association’s use of these funds to be stipulated at the time of transfer.

## 22/200. FINANCIAL

### (i) Payment of Accounts

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

#### **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - DECEMBER 2022**

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP199	T Walker	Mow & strim footpaths	640.00
OP200	Green Tye Mission Hall	Hall hire (1 Nov 22)	43.75
OP201	Mr C Copper	War Memorial maintenance	660.00
OP202	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (Nov)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (Dec)	334.00
OP203	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Dec + backpay)	1,197.04
Total payments			<b>2,954.79</b>

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 below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix A. No matters were highlighted by the Clerk.

#### **SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 6 DECEMBER 2022**

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2022	44,158.77	29,970.81	74,129.58
Income	68,354.96	7,475.00	75,829.96
Expenditure	- 38,860.69	- 3,433.90	- 42,294.59
Closing balance	<b>73,653.04</b>	<b>34,011.91</b>	<b>107,664.95</b>

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
	<b>20,220.00</b>



(iii) Initial 2023/24 Budget and forward financial plan

Cllr I Hunt explained that the Clerk had circulated a draft 2023/24 budget, including an outturn for the current year, and a forward financial plan for initial consideration. He highlighted that the Parish Council had lost income, notably from the regular hire of the Pavilion (around £10,000 per annum) and from the Litter Agency (nearly £5,000 per annum), as well as the previous New Homes Bonus (last payment around £15,000 2020/21 financial year). This places pressure on the precept and Parish Council reserves unless other income sources are identified.

Cllr J Liversage highlighted that there no real demand for further play equipment so the sums allocated to this could be removed from the budget. (£5,000 in each of the current and next financial years). It was also noted that the Sports Association permission would be needed if the playground was to be extended beyond its current boundaries.

It was noted that further consideration is required regarding the Pavilion in terms of cleaning requirements and impact from the loss of the Litter Agency income. In addition, a request had been received for a bin to be installed by Londis.

Ultimately, the key decision required before the next meeting is whether to increase the precept by £1,000 to £43,000 or to leave at the current level of £42,000. Once the council tax base is known, the calculation of the Band D equivalent to be circulated to all Cllrs by the Clerk for a precept of £42,000 or a precept of £43,000.

22/201. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

22/202. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

However, the Chair highlighted that the lower branches on the Lime trees in Church Lane needed to be removed and it was agreed that a quote should be obtained to consider dealing with this, noting that the trees were the responsibility of Highways.

22/203. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

22/204. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:06 pm.

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

### BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 6 DECEMBER 2022

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2023	2023	
	BUDGET £	ACTUAL £	
<b>INCOME</b>			
Precept	42,000.00	42,000.00	
Litter Agency	4,275.00	4,884.58	
Pavilion income	9,660.00	4,804.00	FTKL ceased hire of Pavilion October 2022
Grant	300.00	300.64	
Other	60.00	5.46	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	16,360.28	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>61,295.00</b>	<b>68,354.96</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Staff costs	7,200.00	7,238.28	Budget excludes increase in hours and pay awards
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	5,387.46	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,734.64	2,734.64	
Administration costs	2,960.00	1,903.77	
Insurance	2,650.00	1,337.13	
Audit fees	850.00	845.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,000.00	6,799.42	
Litter Agency	4,008.00	3,006.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	805.00	811.90	
Pavilion	4,000.00	2,967.58	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	-	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Neighbourhood Plan	-	1,245.38	
Capital - Playground equipment	5,000.00		
Capital - Defibrillator		2,440.00	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	10,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	2,109.13	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>58,630.10</b>	<b>38,860.69</b>	