

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 7th February 2023, in the Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7:31 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.

23/17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr B Bird.

23/18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

23/19. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/20. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- the Henry Moore Foundation consultation relating to the Sheep Field Barn on the 12th January had been well attended. The architects had been in attendance to answer all queries, and the feeling amongst those present was that the project would be a welcome addition to the Foundation, and was being sympathetically planned;
- Cllr B O'Neill was thanked for installing the replacement dog bin at the south end of the village, on Footpath 29;
- Cllr S Smith was thanked for organising the defibrillator training on Tuesday 31st January. The Saturday morning session, planned for the 28th January, is being rescheduled for another Saturday morning; and
- two residents were thanked for continuing to run the Telephone Box book exchange which is kept neat and tidy, and full of books.

23/21. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 10th January 2023 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

23/22. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair stated that the report on outstanding matters and resolutions had not changed much, with a number of items being in progress. The benches in the parish had been documented and this information provided to the Clerk for the Fixed Asset Register.

The Chair reported that she had added a task to consider whether any further play equipment is required in the future.

It was agreed that the Clerk would organise for the tree management survey to be updated prior to work being organised for the end of the year.

The Clerk reported that a negative water test result for the Pavilion had been received so no legionella present.

23/23. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground

Cllrs D McDonald and K Twort confirmed that there was no recent Sports Association meeting to report back on.

The Chair reported that 2022/23 Year 6 children at St Andrew's had raised approximately £360 for charity and would like to donate £250 to the Parish Council for a new bin at the playground. As the existing litter bins in the playground need repair work, it was agreed that two new bins would be purchased to replace these, with the Parish Council covering any costs in excess of the £250 donation. In addition, it was agreed that:

- the Clerk would invoice the School for the donation; and
- a plaque would be added to one of the bins to reflect being funded by the children's donation.

In discussion, it was also highlighted that the litter bin by the tennis courts also needed replacing but it was felt that this may be a responsibility for the Sports Association or Tennis Club to address.

Cllr B O'Neill highlighted that the stones had slipped down the walkway from the Recreation Ground car park to near the phone box, making this path slippery. It was suggested that the

stones were shovelled back up, perhaps as part of a volunteer day on the 8th May for the King's Coronation.

Pavilion

Cllr D McDonald stated that negotiations for a new long hire of the Pavilion were ongoing.

Funding of Recreation Ground

Cllr D McDonald reported that the funding review was at the stage where preliminary legal advice was required on what could or could not be undertaken under the existing Deeds. It was agreed that the nature of advice being sought would be drafted prior to the Chair seeking free legal advice via Herts Association of Town & Parish Councils (HAPTC).

Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton provided the following update:

- the operation of the hall is going well with most groups having returned after COVID and weekend bookings being received for children's parties;
- a suggestion was made that the Parish Council may wish to consider taking the lead to develop a "warm hub service" for next winter. A number of other village halls locally are offering this sort of service, having received grants from East Herts Council. This service could take the form of a charity cafe service serving tea, coffee, soup, sandwiches which could operate on quiet days at a minimal rent with perhaps all payment by donation, with all profits going to the local food bank. The Village Hall Management Committee might be able to find helpers for such an endeavour but someone else would need to take on organisational activities for this venture;
- no one has expressed interest in taking on the Bookings Secretary role; and
- the Committee has struggled with some administrative issues but these are gradually being resolved.

In terms of a "warm hub service", it was noted that coffee mornings take place once a month at the Green Tye Mission Hall and at the Congregational Church. In addition, it was noted that informing people of these events was difficult as not all residents subscribe to the parish magazine.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that, with the dry weather, a degree of normality had returned to the condition of the footpaths and bridleways in the parish, making walking and rambling a pleasant experience following the weeks of wet muddy conditions experienced early in the year.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- fly tipping: all the various incidents of fly tipping in the roads and lanes around the village have been cleared by East Herts Council (EHC). EHC have appeared more responsive over the past few weeks which in itself is a good sign. Several local residents have taken to clearing up litter and the remaining items that EHC seem to miss on occasion. Although good news, everyone must continue to be vigilant and be quick to spot and report incidents of fly tipping as they happen. The local “NextDoor” neighbourhood news feed has been expressing the feelings of many residents that the conditions and limitations imposed at the local recycle centres have caused the increase in fly tipping in the area;
- Bridleway 7: the overgrown vegetation, hedgerow and undergrowth at Brands Farm has been cut back and is now clear;
- Bridleway 28: the fallen tree at Hadham Towers has been removed; and
- Windmill Way: a new signpost has recently been installed when residents reported that the previous one had gone missing. A few days later a resident cut back and trimmed their hedge, only to find the missing post in situ.

Bin collection

Cllr I Hunt explained that, from April 2023, the Parish Council would no longer be receiving a “litter agency” grant from East Herts Council (EHC) to cover the cost of the litter bin emptying undertaken locally. From April, the litter bins situated by the highway will be emptied by EHC. In addition, it is anticipated that the ownership of these bins will transfer to EHC. Cllr I Hunt also highlighted that a number of bins, mainly on the Recreation Ground, will still need to be emptied.

It was agreed that a new arrangement would be negotiated with the existing litter picker, for reduced hours, which would be funded by the precept. The proposed sum was within the budget allocation in the 2023/24 budget approved in January 2023.

The Chair reported that she and Cllr S Smith would be meeting with the Shared Waste Team on the 15th February to clarify the bins being transferred to EHC or that will require moving.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

The Chair reported that Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) had highlighted that there were three main problems affecting the Highways Department:

- lack of staff for over a year as unable to fill vacancies with suitable people;
- the specific contact for the parish is doing the equivalent of 3 jobs; and
- gritting takes precedence and is undertaken by the road works employees.

In addition, the Chair reported that increasing costs are causing projects to be postponed but not cancelled. Work in relation to the passing places in Kettle Green Lane and the signage for Malting Lane/Danebridge Road has been promised by the end of March 2023.

Finally, the Chair stated that the appalling state of Danebridge Road has been reported to Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) to see what he can do to help in respect of this.

“20s plenty”

Cllr D McDonald provided an update following a “20s plenty” campaign Zoom meeting on the 23rd January. In summary, the key points were:

- 35 out of 125 town/parish councils have now signed up to the campaign (increase of 22 from that reported at the January meeting (Minute ref: 23/7 (vii)));
- “20s plenty” need to be more organised in order to provide campaign materials and to encourage more parishes to join in; and
- Herts County Council (HCC) approach is to review on street by street basis rather than over a wide area.

Cllr D McDonald stated that the Parish Council needed to consider three questions:

1. Does the Parish Council support, in principle, a 20 mph speed limit in the village?
2. What does the local community think?
3. What form of consultation should the Parish Council undertake in reference to question 2?

Cllr I Hunt noted that, although slightly different to the latest proposed wording, the Parish Council passed a resolution at its September 2022 meeting to support the “20s plenty” campaign. (Minute ref: 22/150) In addition, he commented that a route to achieving success would be via County Cllrs, to ensure that future sustainable transport plans by HCC give this issue greater prominence.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed to consult the local community on this campaign.

Cllr B O’Neill highlighted that the number of potholes that currently exist is also an aid to slowing traffic down. He added that he reported a number of the larger potholes on HCC’s fault reporting website page.

Street lights

Cllr B O’Neill reported that a number of street light failures have not been addressed. In addition, the street lights are supposed to turn off at midnight but not all of the street lights have been set for this, nor has the brightness been turned down for some.

Finally, Cllr B O'Neill commented that he would monitor progress in relation to these points.

(iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported that the review of the Parish Council website was still in progress. He commented that any final solution for the website will take into account what Parish UK network and Parish Online offer.

(v) Security

Cllr J Liversage reported the following items from OWL messaging:

- being wary of scammers is essential in the present climate. Loan fee fraud is an increasingly common scam and TV licencing email scams still persist;
- report scams or possible scams to Action Fraud (<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or call them on 0300 123 2040) and send suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk; and
- fire safety may be more important at the moment when fires may be built to combat the cold. Three quarters of fire related deaths happen in the home. For free advice, contact Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to request a Safe and Well visit. If you are worried about a young person's behaviour around fire you can report it confidentially – search for "Report dangerous behaviour around fire".

In addition, there was one reported crime: between 28th and 29th January 2023, two 7 ft bay trees were stolen from outside a house on Much Hadham High Street.

Finally, Cllr J Liversage reminded those present to report all non-emergency matters by calling 101.

(vi) Stansted Airport

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

(vii) Other

Parish UK Network

The Parish UK network displays open-source data about parishes across England and Wales and the Parish Council has been invited to include its contact details on the website. Following discussion, it was agreed that it would be a personal choice by Cllrs to have their contact details listed on this website and Cllrs to inform the Clerk. In addition, Cllr S Smith would investigate how this website would be kept up to date as well as the source of the 2021 census data given a concern raised as to its accuracy.

Sewage discharges into the River Ash

Cllr D McDonald reported that a resident had approached him to raise concerns regarding sewage discharges into the River Ash. It was recognised that this was an issue that required further investigation and understanding in order to identify what action the Parish Council could take.

Cllrs B Bird and B O'Neill agreed to take this forward.

23/24. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

23/25. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) 20 mph in the hamlets

A resident commented that there were sections of the road in the hamlets where it was physically not possible to go fast but where it was, 20 mph would be supported.

(ii) Station Road

On behalf of a resident, Cllr K Hamilton reported that residents of Station Road, whilst acknowledging they are responsible for their road frontage, would appreciate help to repair the poor road surface. In addition, the Parish Council was asked if it would be prepared to look after any funds raised to repair the road, paying related bills when work undertaken.

It was noted that an attempt had been made previously to establish a "Residents Association" in this road.

The Chair agreed to reply to the resident concerned on behalf of the Parish Council.

23/26. KING'S CORONATION

The Chair reminded those present that the King's Coronation takes place over the weekend of the 6th to 8th May, including a Bank Holiday Monday. A "Big Lunch" is on Sunday 7th May and some volunteers have offered assistance to organise something, probably on the Recreation Ground. The main idea to date is a "Bring your own picnic", with the possibility of organised games and refreshments from the Pavilion. However, as yet, no one wants the responsibility of leading an organising group.

If a viable celebration proposal is put forward, the Parish Council would not be averse to contributing to costs incurred.

23/27. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - FEBRUARY 2023

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP210	LH Cook Plumbing & Heating Ltd	Pavilion shower repair	132.00
OP211	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Quarterly playground inspection (December)	60.00
OP212	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	387.79
OP213	BA Mr K Lunniss (Welddesign)	Repair entrance gates at St Andrew's Burial Ground	680.00
OP214	MH Sports Association	Insurance costs for Pavilion, Sports Pavilion & Equipment shed + public liability	1,300.00
OP215	MH Village Hall	D Billson - Pavilion cleaning (Jan)	80.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Agency (Feb)	334.00
OP216	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Feb)	781.04
Total payments			<u>3,754.83</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 2022/23 to date was received. The summary financial position is as 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 FEBRUARY 2023

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2022	44,158.77	29,970.81	74,129.58
Income	68,358.49	7,810.00	76,168.49
Expenditure	- 45,062.11	- 4,381.09	- 49,443.20
Closing balance	<u>67,455.15</u>	<u>33,399.72</u>	<u>100,854.87</u>

FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	104,562.24	
Add: Outstanding deposits	-	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-3,754.83</u>	100,807.41
Total Fund Balances		<u>100,854.87</u>

Earmarked Reserves are excluded from the Parish Council balance to identify the general balance available for the Parish Council:

Parish Council closing balance		67,455.15
<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u>		
(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation	1,570.00	
(2) Open spaces	9,905.00	11,475.00
General balance available for Parish Council		<u>55,980.15</u>

Note: general balance not to fall below £30,000 unless due to cash flow, or in the case of unexpected events or emergencies.

23/28. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 10th January 2023 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

23/29. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/30. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on the following matters:

- photo ID will be required to vote at a polling station from now on, starting with the election on 4th May. Passports, driving licences plus a number of other options are acceptable as photo ID and those without any suitable photo ID can obtain a "Voter Authority Certificate". More details are available on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page;
- timetable for the 4th May elections is expected to be issued soon and details will be publicised once received. The Parish Council may want to consider what, if any, other publicity it wants to give this upcoming election;
- East Herts Council (EHC) have been allocated £886,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund & Rural Prosperity Fund to fund town and village centre improvements. If the Parish Council is interested in applying for funds, a dedicated EHC officer is available to help support and facilitate ideas towards developing feasible project proposals for funding; and
- a water colour painting of Much Hadham High Street by Dennis Loye is available for sale. A photo of the painting will be posted on the Parish Council's website and social media pages and if anyone is interested in purchasing the painting, the seller's contact details can be obtained from the Clerk.

23/31. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 7th March 2023 at 7:30 pm at the Green Tye Mission Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:13 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 7 FEBRUARY 2023

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2023	DATE	
	BUDGET	2023	
	£	ACTUAL	£
INCOME			
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	8.99	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	16,360.28	
TOTAL INCOME	61,295.00	68,358.49	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	7,200.00	8,800.36	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	2,361.77	
Insurance	2,650.00	2,637.13	
Audit fees	850.00	845.00	
General Data Protection Regulation compliance	35.00	35.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,000.00	7,944.42	Tree work (£1,095) + part of noticeboard repairs (£1,000) funded from "Open Space" earmarked reserve
Litter Agency	4,008.00	3,674.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	805.00	879.62	
Pavilion	4,000.00	3,641.90	
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	2,435.43	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	58,630.10	45,062.11	