

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 4th July 2023, in the Green Tye Mission 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 5 members of the public.

23/105. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

23/106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

23/107. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/108. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair highlighted the following matters:

- roads in the parish will be closed on Sunday 9th July between 9:45 am to midday whilst a Charity Race in support of The Bishop's Stortford High School's Mitre Fund takes place; and
- 'Picnic at the Petite Prom' is taking place again this year in support of the Isabel Hospice on the 14th and 15th July.

23/109. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th June 2023 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

23/110. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

Covered as part of other agenda items.

23/111. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Recreation Ground, including Pavilion

Cllr K Twort reported that no meeting of the Sports Association had taken place in the last month. In addition, he reported that a list of repairs to the Pavilion had been proposed and quotes were awaited. The Chair highlighted that the guttering in front of the building needed repair.

Cllr D McDonald reported that he had obtained the contact details for the cleaner used by the Tennis Club who would be approached to see if they would be interested in cleaning at the Pavilion as and when required. It was suggested that the Pavilion should be cleaned on a monthly basis whilst not being used on a full-time basis.

The Clerk confirmed that she had cleaned the Pavilion prior to a children's party recently, highlighting that she had cleared most of the old spider webs, spiders and a significant level of dirt from the internal doors, the seating in the changing rooms, some walls (with further walls being cleaned by the hirer) and the door out to the carpark from the home changing room. During this, it was noticed that spider webs and other detritus had accumulated on the outside behind the window shutters. It was agreed that arrangements would be put in place for the outside of the Pavilion to be cleaned on an annual basis. In addition, even if there are no hires booked, a monthly internal clean would be scheduled.

The Chair also reported that he had cleaned some graffiti from the Pavilion's outside walls.

In addition, the Chair reported that:

- it had recently become evident that there is a thriving community football group for youngsters every Sunday morning, led by a local resident; and
- a green litter bin had been ordered for the playground following the initiative of Year 5 pupils at St Andrew's in raising funds for it. Delivery is expected in mid-August.

Legal expenses for Recreation Ground funding review

As background, Cllr D McDonald reiterated that there is a concern about the viability of the present management and financial structure under which the Recreation Ground is operated. As a consequence, there is a desire to explore whether alternative structures and uses for the Recreation Ground can be found, either within or without the constraints currently imposed by the Deeds for which legal advice has been requested.

Cllr D McDonald explained that Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC) were approached for advice but given the nature and complexity of the issues involved, the “free legal advice” scheme was not available for this matter. Instead, HAPTC provided details of two solicitors that they recommended as having the relevant specialist expertise. Enquiries were made of both recommendations, following which, a partner in Wellers Law Group was engaged based on the on the quality and detail of the partner’s response and willingness to consider providing advice on a fixed fee basis.

Cllr D McDonald stated that preliminary advice, including responses to follow up questions, has been obtained for a fixed cost fee of £650 + VAT. For future advice, the following estimates have been provided:

- redrafting the objects of the Sports Association, should it be necessary in order to restructure the management or financing of the Recreation Ground, and the drafting of a resolution to achieve this: **£400 + VAT**; and
- establishing a new “Charitable Incorporated Organisation” (CIO) to replace the Sports Association: **£850 + VAT**. This would be required only if a substantial change to the objects and management of the Sports Association was required.

Cllr D McDonald commented that all of these figures are significantly less than had been anticipated. He concluded that whilst these estimates totalled £1,900 + VAT, it was possible that additional issues may arise from the further anticipated advice which will fall outside the scope of these estimates and he recommended that the existing budget of £1,000 + VAT was increased by £2,000 to a total of £3,000 + VAT.

In discussion, it was confirmed that only the Sports Association can effect changes to the management and financial arrangements for the Recreation Ground. The Parish Council cannot unilaterally make any changes. An anticipated outcome from this review was that, in future, the Parish Council would only receive one funding request from the Sports Association for consideration when setting the Parish Council budget.

RESOLVED to approve a revised total budget of £3,000 + VAT for legal expenses associated with reviewing the management and funding arrangements for the Recreation Ground.

Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton provided the following update:

- an external light in the passage beside the Village Hall has been replaced. If there are any other problems with the lights, they will be replaced with LED which will provide a better light in the winter months;
- a new Bookings Secretary started on the 1st July;
- a revised notice regarding the nearest defibrillator will be created for the noticeboard in the Hall. Although the dentist is the nearest, it is only available when the dentist is open. The defibrillator at the Pavilion is available 24/7; and

- the feedback from the car park survey at the annual meeting was that people should pay to park there if they are not using the Hall.

The Chair reminded those present that the Parish Council had been asked to consider the issues that may arise from tighter management of the Village Hall car park. It was agreed that Cllrs K Hamilton and B O'Neill would seek Cllrs views before discussing further with the Village Hall Chair.

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

General

Cllr S Smith commented that June had been a very dry month for the area in general resulting in a hardened surface on footpaths and bridleways providing walkers, ramblers and horse riders with a firm ground underfoot to exercise.

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith provided the following update:

- PRoW - all clear with no new issues reported or pending apart from low branches on Byway 46 at Old Park Farm, Southend, Perry Green which interfere with horse riders. These have been examined Herts County Council (HCC) and trimming will commence in late summer once the bird nesting season has closed;
- trimming cycle - first phase of the annual vegetation cut back completed for all paths in the area on the standard schedule. Residents can notify him if they feel that a footpath or bridleway which is not on the schedule requires such treatment as he will make arrangements for HCC to make them a special case. The second phase of schedule commences in mid-August; and
- outstanding work - no additional news on any of the outstanding work being undertaken in the parish: Footpath 11 diversion; Footpath 20 bridge repair.

Cllr J Liversage noted that some work had been undertaken on the Footpath 20 bridge recently.

The Chair highlighted that the developers of the land behind Hill House had offered to trim the footpath down beside the school if the school asked.

River Ash

Cllr B O'Neill reported that a survey had been completed and the results were good although he noted that it was difficult to obtain an e-coli test kit.

In addition, Cllr B O'Neill stated that he had been liaising with a teacher at St Elizabeth's with a view to getting the children involved in the surveying. Whilst the children would not be able to collect the water samples, these could be collected and taken to the school for analysis.

The Chair reported that the last reported sewage discharge into the River Ash per the Thames Water website was the 9th May.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Cllr S Smith reported that there was still the occasional incidence of fly tipping in Danebridge Road. He also highlighted that Herts County Council had improved its provision of useful information in relation to Highways and Environment, noting that information was available on a neighbourhood basis.

The Chair commented that Tower Hill had been closed earlier for drain cleaning and a further day or two was expected between now and the 14th July.

iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported that the new design and refurbishment of the Parish Council website was still in progress. In addition, he reported that a person had been blocked from the Parish Council's Facebook page due to posting inappropriate comments.

The Chair highlighted that a new Facebook group called Much Hadham Village Forum had been established for Much Hadham related issues. Residents are encouraged to consider this group as it appears to be properly administered and has clear rules about what is acceptable and unacceptable content.

(v) Security

Based on information from OWL messaging, Cllr J Liversage provided the following update:

- no reported crime for May;
- 27th June 2023 – attempted theft from a vehicle parked on a front drive and advice that people should remove all loose items from their car and lock it;
- notification that FREE Hertfordshire Health Walks are advertised through www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks;
- reminder that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) of any kind should be reported, noting that young people are not always the main perpetrators of ASB. The term covers a wide range of social issues including unwanted phone calls, vagrancy, fly tipping and a wide range of nuisances by drivers, fireworks, drug use, neighbours or abandoned animals.

The Chair stated that there had been a report on social media that 4 vehicles in Windmill Way had been broken into on the 30th June.

Remember – 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.

Cllr B O'Neill highlighted that he'd noticed a significant number of flights taking off around 5:55 am, before the allowable take-off time of 6:00 am. In discussion, Cllrs noted that planes appear quieter and operating in batches.

Cllr S Stewart agreed to share the ways that complaints about airport noise can be made.

(vii) Other

Land behind Hill House

The Chair reported that since the last meeting, an on-site meeting attended by 2 Cllrs and other interested parties had taken place with the owners of the land behind Hill House to discuss the ongoing maintenance of the site. A note of this meeting has been circulated to all Cllrs and the salient points were summarised by the Chair.

Discussion focused on:

- the usefulness to the Parish Council of the unmet housing need survey which the developer is proposing to undertake as well as the possibility of including Parish Council specific questions in relation to '20s plenty' and the future use of the Pavilion. The importance of ensuring that the inclusion of any such questions did not imply Parish Council support for the development was noted;
- the need to be clear on the definition of affordable housing; and
- the importance of understanding what benefits for the parish could be obtained through this development, for example additional community space, should planning permission be sought (although current policies would seem to prevent it for now).

In broad principle, it was agreed that the Chair should explore further the inclusion of simple yes/no questions in the survey relating to '20s plenty' and the Pavilion. In addition, consideration will be given to all Cllrs receiving a briefing from the developers on the proposals for this site.

23/112. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

23/113. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Tree planting

A resident asked what the outcome had been of the proposal to plant trees on the common land in Green Tye and Perry Green.

The Chair reported that this proposal had been withdrawn and was no longer a matter for the Parish Council. However, Cllr B Bird understood that the Perry Green & Green Tye Preservation Society now planned to plant a Christmas tree in the field adjacent to the Mission Hall and to plant a tree commemorating the late Queen on land adjacent to the common at Green Tye.

(ii) Land behind Hill House

A resident made the following points in relation to the potential development of the land behind Hill House:

- the key to getting a good response to a survey was the distribution of the questionnaires. In addition, it would be important to ensure that the Parish Council does not become compromised if it includes some parish specific questions in the developer's survey;
- it would be beneficial to secure any proposal for an open space to be given to the Parish Council by a s106 agreement;
- need to recognise that the developer will want to secure the Parish Council's goodwill towards their proposal; and
- it may be helpful if the Parish Council established a sub-committee to consider site specific points as the development proceeds.

(iii) Hedgerows

In response to a resident's question regarding cutting back hedgerows from Bourne Lane to Green Tye, Cllr S Smith stated that it is the landowner's responsibility to keep hedgerows cut back. If the responsibility of Herts County Council (HCC), a response is prompt if there are visibility issues although HCC will not undertake any work on B roads.

Cllr J Liversage added that East Herts Council will assist people in identifying landowner if they are called.

It was noted that one of the areas that requires cutting back is the responsibility of the Parish Council – the stretch of common land by the noticeboards in Green Tye. The Clerk will arrange to get this work undertaken.

(iv) Church Lane

Cllr B O'Neill queried whether the Parish Council could take any action to prevent the cars parking in Church Lane from encroaching into the space allocated for priests near the church gates. It was agreed that any action taken, such as a letter to residents, should be undertaken by the church and the Clerk will raise this with the Rector.

(v) Potential Hadham Hopper replacement

Cllr B O'Neill reported that he had attended the recent meeting at St Elizabeth's, convened to discuss a potential Hadham Hopper replacement. It was noted that St Elizabeth's would be providing the bus and existing drivers had agreed to drive for free, and appropriate insurance had been sourced.

23/114. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

Grass cutting payment to the Sports Association

Cllr D McDonald reported that he had received answers to questions raised with the Sport's Association Treasurer regarding their accounts and funding status. However, further issues had arisen given that the Association's reserves are currently in the region of £13,000, higher than the long-term average of £10,000, and membership income will be received for the first time in 3 years. If the Parish Council does not make the grant of £2,000 for the grass cutting, the Association's reserves will reduce but not to a critical level.

Finally, Cllr D McDonald stated that a cash projection had been requested from the Association's Treasurer to the end of their financial year (31 December), so that a clearer view of the Association's funding needs can be seen. It is anticipated that the required information will be received for the next meeting and enable the grass cutting funding request to be responded to.

Pavilion water

The Clerk highlighted that the payment to the Sports Association for the Pavilion water was significantly higher than expected, due to a meter reading on the 14th June 2023, the first since 14th August 2020. It was evident that Castle Water had not estimated the water usage appropriately in between readings but going forward, the meter will be read more frequently.

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

RESOLVED that Clerk's salary for August be duly authorised for payment.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - JULY 2023

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP245	BA MH Landscapes	Maintenance at burial grounds Jan - Mar '23	540.00
OP246	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Quarterly playground inspection (June)	60.00
OP247	HAPTC	Training for Cllr B Bird	34.00
OP248	Wight Computer Ltd	Remote support	54.00
OP249	EMC Contracts Ltd	Pavilion lock repairs/adjustments	162.00
OP250	MH Sports Association	Pavilion water	376.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter picking (Jul)	91.00
OP251	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Jul)	781.04
Total payments			<u>2,098.04</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr S Smith and Cllr K Twort.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2023/24 to date was received. The summary financial position is as below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix A. No matters were highlighted by the Clerk.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 4 JULY 2023

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2023	64,058.77	33,469.72	97,528.49
Income	24,312.25	1,715.00	26,027.25
Expenditure	- 16,110.99	- 1,083.66	- 17,194.65
Closing balance	<u>72,260.03</u>	<u>34,101.06</u>	<u>106,361.09</u>

FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	111,272.71	
Add: Outstanding deposits	-	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-4,959.08</u>	106,313.63
Total Fund Balances		<u>106,361.09</u>

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

Parish Council closing balance		72,260.03
<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>60,785.03</u>

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

23/115. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 6th June 2023 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

23/116. BURIAL AUTHORITY

Receipt of the minutes for the Burial Authority meeting held on 6th June 2023 was deferred to the next meeting.

23/117. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/118. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported on behalf of the M11 Junction 8 Improvement Scheme that as the works are progressing, there are some works that require overnight and weekend closures.

The southbound offslip of Junction 8 of the M11 will be closed (9 pm until 5 am) during these times and a diversion which will require vehicles to carry on to Junction 7A and return on the M11 to Junction 8 northbound offslip.

The list below details the upcoming dates and the works being undertaken during these dates:

- single night closures between 07/07/23 and 08/07/23 to allow piling works to be undertaken for the gantry to be installed in future;
- weekend closure of the 14/07/23 to 16/07/23 as one lane of the offslip is being fully excavated and replaced during this weekend; and
- weeknight closures commencing from 17/07/23 until September 2023 for a programme of works that require the lighting cables and ducting to be renewed on the junction and down the mainline of the motorway.

Note - the motorway services will still be open during these closures.

This information will be circulated to all Cllrs, and posted on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page.

23/119. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As there will be no meeting in August, the next meeting will be Tuesday 5th September 2023 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:07 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 4 JULY 2023

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2024	DATE	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	43,000.00	21,500.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	352.00	Football sub from 2022/23
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	-	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,460.25	
TOTAL INCOME	48,660.00	24,312.25	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	9,844.00	3,124.16	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	2,693.73	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,734.64	1,367.32	
Administration costs	3,015.00	1,028.16	
Legal costs	1,000.00	-	
Insurance	2,850.00	1,089.75	
Audit fees	815.00	465.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,500.00	3,889.27	
Litter	2,000.00	364.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,085.00	1.48	
Pavilion	5,550.00	1,071.44	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	300.00	Grant to PG/GTPS for King's Coronation event (£300)
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	716.68	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	52,781.10	16,110.99	