

## **MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023, 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: 4 members of the public and apologies were received from F Forth, Clerk who was unwell.

### 23/137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr S Smith.

### 23/138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in the first part of Agenda Item 147.

### 23/139. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

### 23/140. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair wished the Clerk a speedy recovery, and would be taking the Minutes of the meeting.

### 23/141. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

Cllr B O'Neill arrived.

### 23/142. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Outstanding Matters report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The following updates were received:

- Pavilion – Cllr K Twort would forward a quote received for works to the Pavilion, to the Chair, for consideration at the next meeting; and
- War Memorial to the Recreation Ground – the Chair had contacted the landowner's representative, requesting the unfinished fence be completed across the area.

## 23/143. MEMBERS' REPORTS

### (i) Community

#### Recreation Ground

The new Sunday Football team has started their season, and all seems to be going well, and the paperwork has been completed. There appears to be no problem with both the men's football and the children's community football sessions co-existing on the recreation ground.

#### Pavilion

Cllr I Hunt reported that he had tracked down the appliances causing higher than expected electricity bills. The Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt for taking so much time and trouble to solve this problem.

#### Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton reported on the Village Hall Management meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September, when the Treasurer reported the Village Hall is in a much sounder financial situation than 9 months ago. In answer to a question, it was reported the Village Hall bank balance stands at approximately £21,000.

As there have been no rises in hiring rates since 2018, a 10% increase is proposed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. Essential maintenance works are continuing, and a new smart (electricity) meter is going to be installed.

There are no plans to install EV (electric vehicle) charging points in the car park, as the Village Hall has little or no funds for this project. It was also noted that the Housing Survey being sent to every household would include a section on the use of the Village Hall car park.

Cllr B O'Neill advised that a Christmas Party in the Village Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> December was being planned and funds raised will be divided between the village hall and the Sick Children's Trust (for Acorn House at Addenbrooke's).

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

Public Rights of Way

In the absence of both Cllr S Smith and the Clerk, the Chair read Cllr S Smith's report.

With the current above-average temperatures and modest rainfall, vegetation growth has continued and there are several instances where additional trimming back of trees, hedgerows and footpaths has been needed. As the second round of the annual cycle of trimming has been completed contractors are being asked to undertake additional work.

- Bridleway 28 – the middle field between the kissing gates has overgrown vegetation and overhanging branches. There is also a large hollow which is continually flooding making it difficult for walkers to traverse. Herts County Council (HCC) have contacted the landowner to undertake the work or, if preferred, allow contractors to rectify the situation;
- Footpath 29 – two new bridges will be installed over the coming months. Landowners who may be impacted will be contacted; and
- Footpath 20 Bridge Repair – still on target for completion in next few weeks.

River Ash

Cllr B O'Neill reported that students from St Elizabeth's school and college attended the last testing session, helping collect samples etc, and seemed to enjoy the experience. He also reported that results were not brilliant, but were remaining reasonable. The problems came from sewage treatments, nitrates/phosphates run-off from farm land, but predominantly water extraction, leading to very low water levels.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

Cllr S Smith had reported an increase in emails published from Herts County Council (HCC) regarding what is happening in the county regarding road repairs and other key highways matters.

The Chair stated with regard to specific projects in Much Hadham, a meeting is planned for the end of the month with HCC Highways, with a view to receiving specific updates on the Kettle Green Lane passing places, the Malting Lane/Danebridge Road signage, and Danebridge Road maintenance. Also, it had been noted that the Lime Trees between the B1004 junction and Church Lane had been trimmed, but that the pavement and bank were still completely overgrown. Both HCC and East Herts Council (EHC) have been contacted, with a query as to where one responsibility starts and the other ends.

Cllr Hunt highlighted the issue of the widening of the entrance to the field by Danebridge bridge and that HCC Highways were informed and taking action.

iv) Media

The improvements to the Parish Council website are still a work in progress.

(v) Security

Based on information from OWL messaging, and PCSO Leon de Bruyn's crime report, Cllr J Liversage reported the following:

- a survey was being carried out on how people would best like to be able to contact the police in non-emergency situations;
- recruiting for volunteer police officers, known as Specials;
- 20 large scale Cannabis factories have been found and closed down in Herts in 2023, resulting in 27 people being arrested and more than 3200 cannabis plants being seized. If anyone suspects such a 'farm', please report it via 101 to aid the police focus on this illegal activity;
- polite reminder to pet owners to refrain from leaving pets in a vehicle;
- please remember to close and lock all doors and windows when leaving your house, to prevent burglars entering.
- Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September, a burglary in Church Lane, when a tractor and 4x4 Yamaha agriculture machine were stolen;
- the theft between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> September of a vehicle parked in Oudle Lane; and
- appeal for witnesses, or dashcam footage for Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September at around 7am when a fatal accident occurred on the A10 near Thundridge travelling North. Anyone with information please contact [rebecca.cornell@herts.police.uk](mailto:rebecca.cornell@herts.police.uk) or call 101 quoting Op Carnation.

Remember that for all non-emergency police matters, please call 101

(vi) Stansted Airport

The Chair repeated her thanks to Cllr D McDonald for all his time and effort in producing the Parish Council's response to the Stansted Noise Action Plan consultation, which was approved last month, in his absence.

Cllr D McDonald agreed to write a short introduction to the consultation response, to be placed on the Parish Council website with the report.

(vii) Other

Cllr I Hunt reported that Hill Residential Ltd, as owners of the land behind Hill House on Tower Hill, gave a presentation to councillors of their current thinking for development of the site at a meeting in the village hall on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

The main components of the plan are:

1. Building ~ 30 houses at the south side, adjacent to the Ash Meadow footpath, including at least 40% affordable housing, with an access road from a new 2-lane junction on Tower Hill, south of Hill House;
2. Gifting land at the north side of the site to the school and laying it out for use as an outdoor classroom;
3. Allocating the middle of the site as openly accessible green space, in a form to be determined through consultation with residents;
4. Re-routing of FP22 and the existing permissive path away from the school grounds and instead along the boundary of the (newly extended) school land, to meet the existing permissive path just before its junction with Oudle Lane; and
5. Opportunities for other village improvements may also present themselves as plans are developed.

To demonstrate there is a need for affordable housing, a housing needs survey will be distributed to every household shortly, to be completed either online or on paper. The Parish Council will use its media resources to encourage completion of the survey and a £1 donation to the Much Hadham Recreational Trust will be made by the company for each completed survey returned, for the benefit of residents.

It was made clear to the company that Cllrs were neither endorsing nor opposing the plans at this stage. It was also made clear that should the plan progress, and depending on the survey results, the requirement would probably be for social affordable housing (including the possibility of additional almshouses) and that local residents must somehow be legally guaranteed priority in its allocation. It was thought unlikely, in the opinion of councillors, that residents would support the release of land in the rural area for development if this were not the case.

The company will hold workshops and other consultations with residents in the coming weeks and months, to include issues such as housing design, site layouts, use of green space etc. They were keen to involve the community in these features and the Parish Council was encouraged to form its own task force or working party to assist with this, which we shall discuss further.

#### 23/144. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported on the following matters:

- Field on corner of Danebridge Road/B1004 – confirmed the activity was being monitored by the EHDC Enforcement officer, as well as the caravan etc on one of the plots in Kettle Green Lane, opposite Moor Place;
- Footpath between B1004 junction & Church Lane – the Chair confirmed that this had not been cleared, and Cllr Devonshire would chase again;

- EV (electric vehicle) charging points at the Village Hall – would not cost the Village Hall anything if it chose to proceed. A private firm supplies the charging points and charges the user via a phone App. The Village Hall recovers these electricity costs from the company, with a surcharge, as previously negotiated;
- Affordable Housing – it had been noted that non-viability reports were resulting in very few affordable houses getting through planning. Rather, a lot of 106 monies were in the offing; and
- Planning Department – reportedly working much better with many more planning applications coming through the system.

#### 23/145. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A representative of Chaldean Estate referred to the condition of the River Ash, and informed the Parish Council that farms were being really encouraged to reduce run off of nitrates etc, and Chaldean was making huge efforts in this regard. He also observed that overextraction was a big problem. He added that the estate would be undertaking a programme of tree maintenance, on well used routes such as Kettle Green Lane and Bromley Lane, over the next 18 months and would endeavour to cause as little nuisance as possible.

The Parish Council was asked if it would support an application for development of land to the rear of Hill House if it included affordable housing, as a response to the upcoming housing needs survey. Cllr I Hunt advised that the Parish Council could not pre-determine its response to an application. Indeed, it had been made clear, as reported earlier in the meeting, that the developers had been told we were neither supporting nor objecting to their proposals at this time. The Parish Council would be listening carefully to residents' views as expressed for example, in the forthcoming workshops and consultations planned by the developers.

A resident was concerned the housing survey would include leading questions for the developer's preferred answers. He was assured that the survey was being carried out by CDA Herts, a charitable organisation specialising in this sort of survey, in order to get fair responses.

#### 23/146. TREE WORK

Before considering the quote for the tree work, the Chair asked the Parish Council to consider thinning a section of trees at the Recreation Ground between the entrance driveway and the boundary with Moor Place. It was noted that the brief for the original survey in June 2020 was in regard to the health & safety of individual trees. A broader woodland management brief had not been considered at that time. In light of the Chair's suggestion, it was agreed to re-assess all the trees with a view to possible coppicing, and the contractor would be contacted to meet and discuss options. Cllrs J Liversage and K Twort agreed to accompany the Chair, and Cllr B Bird to attend at the Green Tye visit.

## 23/147. GRANT REQUEST

Cllr I Hunt left the room for this item, having previously declared an interest, and the grant request from Citizen's Advice East Herts was discussed. The application had been sent to all Parishes in the area, with a request for any amount which seemed suitable.

RESOLVED that a grant of £100 to Citizen's Advice East Herts be approved.

A grant of £2,000 had been requested by the Much Hadham Sports Association for a contribution towards grass cutting at the Recreation Ground. Cllr D McDonald supplied some background to the finances of the Sports Association. He reported they would still have adequate funds at the end of this year without a grant and that the grass cutting amounted to approximately £2,500 pa.

It was noted that the Parish Council had traditionally provided the full amount requested but also that the Parish Council was undertaking a review of the financing of the Recreation Ground, partly to reduce the necessity for grant requests, such as this.

RESOLVED that a grant of £1,000 to the Much Hadham Sports Association for grass cutting, be approved.

## 23/148. FINANCIAL

### (i) Payment of Accounts

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

### **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - OCTOBER 2023**

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP265	Broxap Ltd	Rubbish bin for playground	411.60
OP266	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External audit 2022/23	378.00
OP267	MH Village Hall	Share of 1100 ltr bin costs (used by Litter Picker) [Apr 23 to Sep 23]	230.10
OP268	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Quarterly playground inspection (September)	60.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter picking (Oct)	91.00
DD	PWLB	Loan repayment (Lighting)	1,367.32
OP269	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Oct)	781.04
Total payments			<b>3,319.06</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 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 had been highlighted by the Clerk prior to the meeting.

### SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 3 OCTOBER 2023

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2023	64,058.77	33,469.72	97,528.49
Income	45,934.25	2,335.00	48,269.25
Expenditure	- 20,943.09	- 5,083.66	- 26,026.75
Closing balance	<u>89,049.93</u>	<u>30,721.06</u>	<u>119,770.99</u>

### FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	101,560.59	
Add: Outstanding deposits	21,500.00	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-3,337.06</u>	119,723.53
<b>Total Fund Balances</b>		<u><b>119,770.99</b></u>

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

Parish Council closing balance		89,049.93
<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u>		
(1) Section 106 receipts for sport or recreation	1,570.00	
(2) Open spaces	9,905.00	
(3) Community Football Coaching grant (balance)	232.86	11,707.86
General balance available for Parish Council		<u><b>77,342.07</b></u>

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



(iii) Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

The Clerk had previously circulated the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and reported that PKF Littlejohn, the Parish Council's external auditors, had completed their audit. It was an unqualified opinion and no other matters were raised. The Chair highlighted the Clerk had produced another set of exemplary accounts, and thanked her for her efforts, in her absence.

(iv) Bank reconciliation

Cllr J Liversage reported that she would review the September 2023 bank reconciliation when the Clerk returned to work.

23/149. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

23/150. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> June and 5<sup>th</sup> September had not yet been received.

23/151. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/152. CLERK'S INFORMATION

In the absence of the Clerk, Cllr I Hunt reported that the Henry Moore Foundation has given 3 months' notice to terminate its lease of a small area of land on the Perry Green common by the Bourne stream. The lease gave permission for a footbridge to be erected so that customers could access the garden at The Hoops, from the common.

It is understood that the termination is in connection with ongoing commercial negotiations about the future ownership and operation of The Hoops. Cllrs I Hunt and D McDonald are shortly to meet the relevant parties to establish whether a replacement for the lease is required and will report back.

23/153. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:09 pm.

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

### BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 3 OCTOBER 2023

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2024	DATE	
	BUDGET	2024	
	£	ACTUAL	£
<b>INCOME</b>			
Precept	43,000.00	43,000.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	474.00	Football sub from 2022/23
Grant	300.00	-	
Other	60.00	-	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,460.25	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>48,660.00</b>	<b>45,934.25</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Staff costs	9,844.00	5,467.28	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	2,693.73	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,734.64	2,734.64	
Administration costs	3,015.00	1,540.65	
Legal costs	1,000.00	-	
Insurance	2,850.00	1,089.75	
Audit fees	815.00	780.00	Internal Audit fee slightly less than expected
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,500.00	3,062.37	
Litter	2,000.00	637.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,085.00	45.59	
Pavilion	5,550.00	1,354.28	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	567.14	Grant to PG/GTPS for King's Coronation event (£300); Donated goods to Community Football Coaching £267.14)
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	970.66	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>52,781.10</b>	<b>20,943.09</b>	