

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 7th November 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: F Forth, Clerk and 7 members of the public.

23/154. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr D McDonald.

23/155. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr I Hunt declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 23/165 (i)) and would therefore not be participating in nor voting on the related motion.

No other declarations were made or applications for dispensations sought.

23/156. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/157. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported on the following matters:

- the new rubbish bin, donated by the St Andrew's School Year 6 pupils in the summer, had now been installed at the playground on the Recreation Ground. A smart sign had been added to the bin recording who it was donated by, and a thank you (with photographs) had been sent to the School's Head Teacher. Cllr I Hunt was thanked for installing the bin;
- the rubbish bin at the top of Station Road, previously omitted from the schedule passed to the Shared Waste Team has now been included;
- the missing dog bin in Malting Lane has not been found despite enquiries. This will not be replaced but the need for a dog bin in this location will be reviewed in due course. The Clerk agreed to get this removed from the contract with East Herts Council; and

- the Remembrance Service would be taking place at the War Memorial on Sunday 12th November at 10:50 am at which the Parish Council would be laying a wreath.

Finally, the Chair highlighted to new members of the public present that agenda item 23/163 “Residents’ comments” provides an opportunity to raise matters with the Parish Council.

23/158. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd October 2023 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

23/159. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The outstanding matters and resolutions report had been circulated prior to the meeting. A quote for Pavilion works and progress on tree works would be discussed as part of the next agenda item. The Clerk confirmed that the fixed asset register would be with Cllr I Hunt shortly.

23/160. MEMBERS’ REPORTS

(i) Community

Tree works

The Chair reported that she, together with Cllr J Liversage and Cllr K Twort, had met with a contractor on the 14th October to discuss proposed tree works.

At the Recreation Ground, this involves lifting the lower level of the trees, removing many of the spontaneous saplings - effectively taking a more holistic approach to the woods, rather than simply looking at the trees from a risk point of view. This will tidy and open up the area of woods along the road, enabling more light in for wild flowers and the health of the larger trees. The height of some trees will also need to be reduced.

For the trees on the green at Green Tye, a number need reducing for their health.

A revised quote will be received in due course for consideration.

In discussion, it was also noted that further work at the Recreation Ground is required, to improve the path access to the High Street and to replace the fencing at the entrance.

Pavilion

The Chair reported that the quote circulated with the agenda for the repair works at the Pavilion had been updated, primarily in relation to the replacement heaters. It was agreed that further quotes for heaters would be obtained.

After discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve the following aspects of the quote:

- shower valve supply and fit non concussive valve for £375 + VAT;
- toilet disabled seat supply and fit for £125 + VAT; and
- gutter clean down and winter maintenance check for £280 + VAT.

These items total £780 + VAT.

It was agreed that work on the magnetic codes lock was not required as this function was currently not used.

Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton reported the following matters:

- the financial position for the Village Hall for 2022 shows a loss given the cost of the main hall decoration. However, despite bookings going well, Village Hall running costs are not quite covered. A modest price increase will be made in January 2024 and expenditure will be carefully monitored;
- improvements to the external lighting and the heating system have been completed;
- the manhole cover will be replaced in the gents loos which will hopefully solve the odour problems of regular drain blockages; and
- a Christmas party in the Village Hall on the 16th December is being planned. Funds raised will be divided between the Village Hall and the Sick Children's Trust (for Acorn House at Addenbrookes).

In addition, Cllr K Hamilton reported that she and Cllr B O'Neill had meet a member of the Village Hall Management Committee on the 4th November 2023 to discuss the Village Hall car park. The following potential ideas and solutions to generate income had been suggested:

- create spaces to rent out on the same basis as in place at the front of the Village Hall;
- proposals for where E.V. (Electric Vehicle) charging points should be situated;
- CCTV installed as a deterrent to errant parkers;
- contact various grant schemes – i.e. Stansted Airport Community Fund;
- change the position of the entry and exit to the car park; and
- the possibility of acquiring land for parking.

Cllr K Hamilton concluded that this was an ongoing project. Members of the Village Hall Management Committee were meeting online with East Herts Council on the 8th November 2023 to discuss these options.

In discussion, it was noted that Highways regulations may prevent changing the entrance/exit of the car park, installation of CCTV would be to deter permanent parkers and residents tend to park in the car park to avoid parking on the High Street or because there is no space to do so.

It was agreed that Cllr K Hamilton would circulate the potential ideas and solutions to all Cllrs.

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

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith reported that since the last meeting, there had been a distinct change in the weather pattern with continuous bouts of low pressure and rain, some of it quite heavy. No serious flooding had been encountered but the ground underfoot had remained wet with surface water on many footpaths and bridleways.

In addition, Cllr S Smith reported that Much Hadham was getting its first Volunteer Surveyor as part of a scheme by Herts County Council (HCC) to allocate someone to oversee and report on the condition of public rights of way in the Parish every 6 months. The person in question will be included in all correspondence on PRoW.

Cllr S Smith provided the following specific updates:

- Footpath 11 North part and Footpath 10 South part Diversion – the agent for the applicant, Sworders, have reported the following salient points regarding the current status of the application:
 - it is proposed that the existing ramp is re-built to reduce its gradient, with the addition of a staggered barrier at the roadside, as improvements to the proposed new route. The proposed works, are however subject to the order being confirmed;
 - various landowners remain very supportive of the diversion;
 - one objection is outstanding in response to the most recent informal consultation. It appears there is nothing further to be suggested for the objector to withdraw their objection, despite being happy with the proposed alternative route, they want it in addition to the current route; and
 - HCC need to prepare the new order plan, given the above works. It will then be advertised for the statutory period of 4 weeks. If the objection remains, HCC will need to refer the order to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) who will, if necessary, hold a public local inquiry and decide whether to confirm the diversion order;

- Footpath 20 Bridge – although all other parties are ready to install the new bridge this month, as it coincides with the current Trout and Salmon breeding cycle, the Environment Agency has declared that work should be postponed until March 2024;
- Footpath 29 – contractors are ready to install two new bridges and re-surface the footpath area in between them. While in that area, the contractors will trim hedges and make good the surface of Bridleway 28 to allow their vehicles to reach the site;
- Bridleway 53 – farmer has moved the gas gun and screened it off from passing horse riders;
- Bridleway 7 (Cox Lane) – recent flood waters have now dissipated but the culvert needs to be cleared of debris to prevent future blocking. The Bridges Officer at HCC Highways has been asked to investigate; and
- General Autumnal Knock Back – a final trim and cut back on tree branches and encroaching vegetation on several footpaths and bridleways in the parish will take place over the next couple of weeks.

River Ash

Cllr B O'Neill reported that the River Ash was currently too deep for surveying.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

The Chair reported that a meeting is being held with Herts County Council (HCC) Highways on the 8th November 2023, with a view to receiving specific updates on the Kettle Green Lane passing places, the Malting Lane/Danebridge Road signage, and Danebridge Road maintenance. In addition, she reported receipt of the draft suggested signage for Malting Lane and Danebridge Road, but the ford warning sign at the main road junction with Malting Lane did not include the "No HGVs", so HCC Highways have been asked to review this.

In discussion, Cllrs noted that during the recent rainfall:

- there had been no flooding by the Jolly Waggoners but there had been flooding by the 3 new houses by Culver; and
- excessive debris had resulted on the lanes used for the diversion following the recent closure of Widford Road for roadwork.

It was also noted that it would be useful if road sweeping could take place after flooding to remove the excess debris, as well as reducing the encroachment of banks on to the road.

iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported that as well as posting on the Parish Council Facebook page, new messages are also being posted on the Much Hadham Village Forum page as that seems to be well subscribed and respected by the local community.

(v) Security

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

- a new Legitimacy Plan to increase public confidence and increase scrutiny has been compiled by the Police and Crime Commissioner in Hertfordshire. Before it is finalised residents in Herts can complete a short survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CNJT6S3> by 10th November 2023; and
- burglary in Allens Green when an all-terrain vehicle was removed from property.

Remember that for all non-emergency matters please call 101.

(vi) Stansted Airport

None.

(vii) Other

Lease across common land for access to The Hoops Inn

Cllr I Hunt reported that The Henry Moore Foundation (HMF) had sold, subject to contract, The Hoops Inn in Perry Green. HMF had given notice to the Parish Council to terminate the lease providing for footbridge access to the Inn from the common land. Consequently, discussions were underway with the potential new owner on a replacement lease.

23/161. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

23/162. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr I Hunt presented a summary of the annual report detailed in Appendix A on progress against the Neighbourhood Plan, highlighting the key points as:

- the Parish Council is well served by the East Herts Council's (EHC) Conservation Unit in respect of the protection of our built heritage and historic environment;
- recognition that the formal designation of Assets of Community Value is behind schedule and residents are invited to provide assistance;
- Local Green Spaces remain unaffected by any development proposals and priority views continue to benefit from protection; and
- the parish is on track to deliver its minimum housing requirement for the period 2017-33, with recent applications prioritising smaller homes.

Cllr I Hunt concluded that whilst the Parish Council can be reasonably pleased with the progress made in the first active year of the Plan and the prospects for the next 12 months, there are clouds on the horizon. Most disturbingly, East Herts Council no longer has a 5-year supply of housing land, which means that from November 2024 (two years after the Parish Council's Plan's adoption) developers may seek to build on other sustainable locations around the village. Finally, he stated that the Plan will continue to be used to preserve, protect and develop the parish.

The Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt for his work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

In response to questions, Cllr I Hunt reported that:

- EHC did not have a 5-year land supply because sites are not being built on as anticipated. In addition, the new EHC administration needs to update the District Plan to overcome this problem and this update may take longer than the 12 months' protection remaining under the Plan against greenfield development;
- to meet the parish housing target, assuming that applications at The Bull and Hopleys are approved, a further 15 houses are needed over the next 10 years; and
- the plans for the Gilston development are not far enough advanced to be included in the EHC 5-year supply pipeline.

23/163. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Flooding at Green Tye

A resident reported the existence of excessive flooding at Green Tye as a result of the shocking state of the ditches and queried who was responsible for clearing these ditches.

The Chair confirmed that this work was undertaken following inspections and it would be raised at the meeting with Herts County Council Highways on the 8th November.

It was noted that the resident had taken action to clear the drain outside their property and the Chair concurred that such action was helpful.

(ii) Flooding at Bromley Lane

A resident stated that the blocked drain at Bromley Lane, causing flooding, had been reported to Herts County Council.

(iii) Kettle Green Lane

A resident suggested that cutting back the hedges on the lower part of Kettle Green Lane would be helpful.

It was noted that overgrown hedges can be reported to Herts County Council.

(iv) Road closure

A resident noted that during the Widford Road closure, both Bourne Lane and the ford flooded, causing massive problems during the school run.

(v) Stansted Airport

A resident commented on the statistics released on Stansted Airport night flights limits, which had been made available after the Parish Council had responded to the Airport's Noise Action Plan consultation. These showed excessive numbers by comparison to Heathrow and to the normal level of approved flights.

The resident also reported that Stansted Airport Watch (SAW) was proposing winding down its activities and becoming a foundation.

The Chair stated that Cllr D McDonald took the lead in relation to Stansted Airport, and it was agreed that contact be established in order to compare notes.

(vi) Parish Magazine

In response to a question regarding back issues of the Parish Magazine, the Chair stated that this magazine was published by the Parochial Church Council and an archive of the magazine is maintained by The Forge Museum.

23/164. CHARITY ACCOUNTS

The 2022 accounts from the Parochial Charities - known as Much Hadham Almshouse Charity were received.

The Chair stated that the parish was most fortunate to have the almshouses, and the Parish Council is extremely grateful to the Trustees who give their time and effort in keeping them in good order for their residents.

23/165. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown overleaf, be duly authorised for payment. Cllr I Hunt did not participate in this item or vote due to his declared interest. (Minute ref: 23/155)

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - OCTOBER 2023

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP270	Wight Computers	Remote support	18.00
OP271	Citizen's Advice	Donation	100.00
OP272	MH Sports Association	Grass cutting at Recreation Ground	1,000.00
OP273	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	211.87
OP274	EHC	Playground inspection report (ROSPA)	63.78
SO	M Windmill	Litter picking (Nov)	91.00
DD	PWLB	Loan repayment (Pavilion)	2,693.73
OP275	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Nov)	781.04
Total payments			<u>4,959.42</u>

Payments will be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr S Smith.

(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 B. No matters were highlighted by the Clerk.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 7 NOVEMBER 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	- 25,951.11	- 5,083.66	- 31,034.77
Closing balance	<u>84,041.91</u>	<u>30,721.06</u>	<u>114,762.97</u>

FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	119,674.93	
Add: Outstanding deposits	-	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-4,959.42</u>	114,715.51
Total Fund Balances		<u>114,762.97</u>

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

Parish Council closing balance		84,041.91
<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>72,334.05</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) Initial 2024/25 Budget and forward financial plan

The Clerk had circulated the initial 2024/25 Budget and Forward Financial Plan prior to the meeting to facilitate discussion before the January 2024 meeting where the budget would be approved.

Cllr I Hunt added that this budget and financial plan reflected the position prior to input from Cllrs on future spending. Items to be considered were:

- the use of earmarked funds;
- giving funding to the Village Hall or other community groups, bearing in mind that a funding review for the Sports Association is in progress; and
- funding items raised in the Neighbourhood Plan.

In response to queries raised by Cllr S Smith, the Clerk reported that the annual maintenance contract for the defibrillator was included and to date, no maintenance had been undertaken on the bus shelters specifically and this would be followed up.

The Clerk requested proposals for the items to be included in the budget and financial plan be provided by 27th November so that an updated document can be produced for discussion at the December meeting.

(iv) Bank reconciliation

Cllr J Liversage reported that she had reviewed the September 2023 bank reconciliation, as required by the Financial Regulations, and no issues were identified.

23/166. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 3rd October 2023 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

23/167. BURIAL AUTHORITY

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

The minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held 5th September 2023 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

23/168. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

23/169. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

23/170. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 5th December 2023 at 7:30 pm at the Green Tye Mission Hall, with festive Christmas drinks beforehand from 7:00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:39 pm.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Cllr Ian Hunt, Chair, Planning Committee for November 2023 Parish Council meeting

It is a requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan (p95 para 13.2) that the Chair of the Planning Committee reports to the PC on progress against the Plan at least annually. As the Plan was adopted by East Herts Council in November 2022, a report is now due.

The intention for the Plan was to represent the community's values by preserving the past, serving the present and anticipating the future with confidence.

Heritage and Landscape

As regards the first of these, the Plan seeks to protect key aspects of the natural, built and historic environment.

We continue to see a regular flow of planning applications in relation to listed buildings, seeking consent to make alterations or additions. By and large, those that are approved exhibit a good understanding of the need to preserve the interest and significance of the property, and those that are refused have failed to do so or, in some cases, have not fully appreciated the consequences for the setting of a neighbouring listed property. Overall, in respect of the protection of our built heritage and historic environment, we continue to be well served by the district's Conservation Unit.

However, we are behind where we should be in the number of designations of Assets of Community Value. Of the 6 properties identified in the Plan only one is designated: The Bull, thanks to an application by an action group. An application was also submitted for the "nature reserve" (land behind Walnut Close), by another action group, but was unable to be approved at that time as its registered ownership was unclear. It should be noted that this is not one of the 6 properties identified in the Plan.

It is to be hoped that, given the workloads on parish councillors and the lack of progress to date, more residents will come forward to prepare applications on behalf of the PC for the other 5 properties, being the other two pubs (The Hoops and Prince of Wales), the Londis shop, the allotments car park, and the Health Centre.

Turning to the natural environment and protection of the landscape, the Plan's primary policies were the creation of local green spaces (LGS) and priority views. The 6 LGS remain unaffected by any development proposals, although damage to the natural environment was threatened at Great Leys (the land behind Walnut Close), by its threatened sub-division into plots. Fortunately, it was eventually sold to a local buyer and preserved intact.

With regard to other greenfield areas not given special protection, the future use of the land to the south of Kettle Green Lane and west of FP11 is uncertain, having been divided into plots. Additionally, the land at Dane Bridge causes concern where significant works to change the levels of the land and its surface have been undertaken. Whilst these sites are not specifically mentioned in the NP, they do benefit from the overall policies in relation to green fields and so we seek to involve East Herts' enforcement officers in every incidence of planning breaches.

The 12 priority views continue to benefit from protection. The view through the gates at Moor Place drive had been compromised in recent years by vehicles parking adjacent to the steps to the War Memorial. The reinstatement of bollards now deters parking and, thus, the view has been improved. The recent trimming of the trees in front of St Andrew's church has also restored the view of it from the main road.

Housing

The minimum requirement in the period 2017-33 is for 54 new homes in the village. So far, 24 (44%) have been built and occupied, so we are on-track. A further one is substantially complete (Old Nurseries).

This leaves a requirement for a further 29 homes over the next 10 years. Full planning applications have been submitted for 14 dwellings split between sites at Hopleys and The Bull, and there is every indication that these will be approved, probably with minor amendments to the plans as submitted.

There has been no progress yet with plans for development of the Priest's House site nor have any other windfall sites within the village development boundary come forward. Currently, therefore, a further 15 units are required to be planned for and then built in the next decade (in addition to The Bull and Hopleys) to meet the minimum target.

Outside of the village boundary, barn conversions have been approved at Chaldean (5 units) and at Uffords Barn (1 unit). Approval has been granted for 7 houses on the frontage of St Elizabeth's, to replace existing accommodation. None of these count towards the minimum target, however.

As important as the numbers are, of equal importance is the mix of housing being built to meet the needs of younger people and downsizers. The Plan requires a majority of housing to be in the range 1-3-beds. Since the Plan was adopted, of the 14 units for which full planning applications have been submitted (at The Bull and Hopleys), 12 fall into this range with 9 of these being 2-beds.

Overall, therefore, in both quantity and mix the Plan policies for housing supply are being delivered.

Design

The Plan includes policies requiring sustainable high-quality designs that reference the design characteristics of the Conservation Area. Pleasingly, the designs for the developments behind The Bull and at Hopleys both show considerable thought has gone into the materials to be used and the density of the site layouts, and incorporate features such as chimneys, ridged roofs and proportionate heights.

Indeed, the plans for the site behind The Bull are very visibly influenced by the design of the almshouses on Tower Hill, and they are also designed to meet another Plan policy: to provide housing to meet the needs of older people wanting to downsize. It is intended that through considerate design and appropriate marketing it will, indeed, be older people who benefit.

Looking Forward

Whilst we can be reasonably pleased with the progress made in the first active year of the Plan and the prospects for the next 12 months, there are clouds on the horizon. Most disturbingly, East Herts no longer has a 5-year supply of housing land, which means that from November 2024 (two years after our Plan's adoption) developers may seek to build on other sustainable locations around the village, for example, the land to the rear of Hill House. There are pros and cons of that proposal and I expect the annual report next year will have a clearer view of the prospects for it.

The joint administration at East Herts is revising the local plan but it is unlikely to have new sites and approved policies in place within the next 12 months that would restore the 5-year supply. Besides which, the current government and the next government may well move in different directions too. In the meantime, we shall continue to use the Plan to preserve, protect and develop in the way intended.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 7 NOVEMBER 2023

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2024	DATE	
	BUDGET	2024	
	£	ACTUAL	£
INCOME			
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	
TOTAL INCOME	48,660.00	45,934.25	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	9,844.00	6,248.32	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	5,387.46	
PWLB loan repayment - Parish lights	2,734.64	2,734.64	
Administration costs	3,015.00	1,555.65	
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	4,115.52	
Litter	2,000.00	728.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,085.00	91.88	
Pavilion	5,550.00	1,556.06	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	667.14	Grant to PG/GTPS for King's Coronation event (£300); Donated goods to Community Football Coaching £267.14; Donation to Citizen's Advice East Herts (£100)
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	996.69	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	52,781.10	25,951.11	