

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 6th February 2024, in the Much Hadham 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 1 member of the public.

24/16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr K Hamilton, Cllr I Hunt, Cllr J Liversage and Cllr D McDonald.

24/17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

24/18. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

24/19. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

24/20. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9th January 2024 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

24/21. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair stated that there were no changes to the outstanding matters report.

24/22. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

The Chair noted that the draft 2023 accounts for the Sports Association had been circulated to facilitate continued discussion on the future funding options. Cllr I Hunt and Cllr D McDonald were dealing with this.

In terms of the Pavilion, the Chair stated that a second quote for replacement heaters was expected shortly.

In response to questions, the Clerk confirmed that specific dates for the tree work at the Recreation Ground had not yet been determined but the work would be taking place during the summer holidays. The tree work at Green Tye was taking place in May and it was observed that any logs left by the contractor would be welcomed by local residents, and removed for free, very quickly. The Clerk would make this request to contractor.

Village Hall

Cllr B O'Neill reported that he had not been able to attend the last Village Hall Management Committee meeting, but he was aware that ideas to organise the carpark had been discussed.

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

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith reported that, in the main, the weather over the past four weeks had been reasonably stable and mostly dry. Apart from the occasional gale bringing down the odd tree or branch, conditions for walking, riding and enjoying the countryside had been fairly good.

Specific PRoW updates were:

- Operation Knockback: Footpaths 24 and 46 had been successfully trimmed;
- fallen trees: cleared from Bridleways 28 and 53 and from Footpath 30. Another tree with a dangerously leaning branch on Bridleway 28 will be cleared in the next few days;
- Footpath 29: resurfacing work between the newly installed two bridges has been completed; and
- Footpath 20 bridge: further complications and expense identified, but the planned installation is still scheduled for March, with the potential for preparatory work this month. The main problem is limited access to the area from Church Lane and getting the steel beams for the supporting structure to the site is proving difficult.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

In response to a question, Cllr S Smith reported that access to Watery Lane/ Malting Lane was problematic, particularly given the large pothole in the middle of the road.

The Chair reported that she would be chasing Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) and Herts County Council (HCC) Highways for a meeting to discuss the outstanding actions for the parish. It had been identified that some requested works (such as Danebridge Road) fell into a larger budgetary responsibility and therefore proved extremely difficult to get done. However, it was noted that gully cleaning and road sweeping had taken place recently.

In addition, it was noted that whilst the roadworks in Green Tye had caused issues, the local hamlets' WhatsApp group had worked well in spreading up to date information. This would likely be discussed at the Perry Green & Green Tye Preservation Society AGM this coming Thursday.

iv) Media

Cllr S Smith reported the only item posted in the last month related to fake QR code scams on car park pay and display boards, charging points and even restaurant menus. Scammers stick a fake QR code on top of the correct one and, when used, inappropriate websites are accessed. He also stated that the Stansted Airport Community Survey link would be posted once the Clerk obtained a generic link to use.

In addition, Cllr S Smith reported that it was now easier for him to post on the Parish Council's Facebook page and Much Hadham's Forum Facebook page. Posts to the latter are vetted by that page's administration team.

(v) Security

On behalf of Cllr J Liversage, and based on information from OWL Messaging, the Clerk reported that:

- Hertfordshire Police is alerting residents to the act of 'Cuckooing', which occurs when a criminal takes over a vulnerable person's home to use as a base for criminal activities; and
- there was no reported crime this month but a reminder always to report all crimes.

Finally, the Clerk reiterated the warning to be aware of bogus QR codes, noting that the details of this scam are also available on the Parish Council's website.

[Website link: <https://www.muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk/bogus-qr-codes/>]

Remember to report all crime and for all non-emergency matters please call 101.

(vi) Stansted Airport

On behalf of Cllr D McDonald, the Clerk reported that:

- Stansted Airport Watch (SAW) is now converting into a Community Interest Company (CIC) rather than a discretionary trust; and
- SAW's AGM is on 7th March and will include a resolution for the CIC instead of a trust.

(vii) Other

None.

24/23. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None.

24/24. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Scams

A resident suggested including details of scams in the parish magazine since these tend to affect older people, who might have access to the magazine rather than Facebook or websites.

(ii) Streetlighting

It was highlighted by a resident that despite streetlamps at both Church Lane and New Barns Lane, the north end of the village seemed very dark. It was noted that issues with streetlights need to be reported on Herts County Council's fault reporting website page.

(iii) Thank you

A resident thanked the Chair for the action taken in relation to the Victorian glasshouse that was raised at the last meeting.

24/25. THE GREAT MUCH HADHAM SPRING CLEAN

The Chair reported that the Village Hall Management Committee had set the date for the "The Great Much Hadham Spring Clean" as Saturday, 20th April 2024.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- sign up for the event was to be by the end of February;
- high vis jackets and litter picking callipers could be obtained from the East & North Herts Waste depot in Buntingford;

- soup and sandwiches would be available at the Village Hall on the day; and
- clean up actions proposed by the Parish Council included:
 - sweep and clean the bus shelters;
 - clean the white gates at each end of the village; and
 - trim back hedges by signs and wash signs.

The Chair agreed to discuss next steps with the Village Hall Management Committee Chair.

24/26. LITTER PICKING

RESOLVED to approve the updated contract for the litter picker for 2024/25.

The Chair noted that this provided a small increase in cost and that she would get the updated contract signed.

24/27. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - FEBRUARY 2024

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP288	Wellers Law Group LLP	Legal advice	£780.00
OP289	MH Sports Association	Pavilion electricity	£158.41
OP290	MH Sports Association	Insurance costs for Pavilion, Sports Pavilion & Equipment shed + public liability	£1,430.00
OP291	MH Sports Association	Pavilion water	£30.92
SO	M Windmill	Litter picking (Feb)	£91.00
OP292	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Feb)	£833.04
Total payments			<u>£3,323.37</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 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 6 FEBRUARY 2024

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2023	64,058.77	33,469.72	97,528.49
Income	46,669.55	2,335.00	49,004.55
Expenditure	- 35,057.18	- 6,507.19	- 41,564.37
Closing balance	<u>75,671.14</u>	<u>29,297.53</u>	<u>104,968.67</u>

FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	108,244.58	
Add: Outstanding deposits	-	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-3,323.37</u>	104,921.21
Total Fund Balances		<u>104,968.67</u>

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

Parish Council closing balance		75,671.14
<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)	73.40	11,548.40
General balance available for Parish Council		<u>64,122.74</u>

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

24/28 PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 9th January 2024 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

24/29. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

24/30. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit review had been booked. As in prior years, the review will be undertaken remotely and officially start on the 3rd April although the Internal Auditor may start gathering information prior to that from the website.

In addition, the Clerk highlighted that Herts County Council would be celebrating its 50th anniversary later this year, marking the occasion with an exhibition.

24/31. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 5th March 2024 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:06 pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 6 FEBRUARY 2024

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2024	2024	
	BUDGET £	ACTUAL £	
INCOME			
Precept	43,000.00	43,000.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	474.00	Football sub from 2022/23 (£300); current football sub to date (£50); Party hires (£124)
Grant	300.00	735.30	Grant from St Andrew's School (£250); Grants from Sports Association (£485.30)
Other	60.00	-	
VAT reclaimed	5,000.00	2,460.25	
TOTAL INCOME	48,660.00	46,669.55	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	9,844.00	9,163.44	
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	2,160.03	
Legal costs	1,000.00	650.00	
Insurance	2,850.00	2,519.75	
Audit fees	815.00	780.00	Internal Audit fee slightly less than expected
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,500.00	4,985.52	
Litter	2,000.00	1,001.00	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,085.00	830.02	
Pavilion	5,550.00	2,388.80	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	826.60	Grant to PG/GTPS for King's Coronation event (£300); Donated goods to Community Football Coaching £426.60; Donation to Citizen's Advice East Herts (£100)
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	-	
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	Will be used to part fund this year's tree work
VAT	5,000.00	1,629.92	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	52,781.10	35,057.18	