

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 5th March 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 2 members of the public.

24/32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

24/33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

24/34. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

24/35. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting it was good to have all Cllrs present.

In addition, the Chair reminded Cllrs that consideration was needed in due course as to whether the same style of Annual Parish meeting was to be hosted this year, on the 21st May.

24/36. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th February 2024 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

24/37. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair reported that the outstanding matters report had not been updated but it was noted that the agreement to transfer the parish street lighting to Herts County Council had been received and would be signed after the meeting.

24/38. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) Community

Pavilion – future use

Cllr D McDonald reported that a new enquiry to use the Pavilion as a café had been received and was being discussed. It was noted that potential issues identified previously would need to be considered, including planning requirements and parking. The results of the recent survey on this topic were being considered later in the meeting. (See Minute ref: 24/40)

Pavilion – replacement heaters

Quotes for replacing the heaters in the Pavilion were considered. It was noted from research that infrared style of heaters were required for the space to be heated – the main Pavilion room. This style of heater had been quoted by Contractor B.

Following discussion, taking into account the potential change to the use of the Pavilion and warmer weather, it was RESOLVED to replace only the broken heater and accept the quote from Contractor B. The cost of replacing one heater was £698.06 + VAT. Contractor B is Nick Nunn.

Funding of Recreation Ground

It was noted that the Sports Association's request for additional funding was outstanding and will be considered by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr D McDonald.

Village Hall

Cllr K Hamilton reported the following matters:

- Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee Chair thanked Cllr B O'Neill, and others, for organising the Christmas band night which, as well as being a good event, had raised funds for a couple of charities including the Village Hall;
- lettings are going fairly well and the Village Hall remains busy with at least one or two sessions every day;
- to fix the drains in the gents, a new manhole cover has been fitted. The floor now needs attention so new lino will need to be fitted but this may cause damage to the plaster on at least one wall;
- issue with the stuck thermostat on the Green Room water heater, causing it to overheat, was found to be the tank leaking water on to the thermostat. The water tank has been turned off whilst waiting for quotes for repair. It was noted that the heating control switch had been recently replaced so this repair is expected to cost £2-3,000;
- the AGM will be on the 16th April; and

- the Village Hall Management Committee are looking forward to hosting the volunteers for 'The Great Much Hadham Spring Clean' on the 20th April.

The Chair reported that 25 people had volunteered to date for the spring clean. It was also noted that a meeting with the Village Hall Management Committee Chair was required to discuss the specifics of the spring clean such as the catering and what was happening beyond the bounds of the Village Hall. Cllr B Bird, Cllr K Hamilton, Cllr I Hunt and Cllr S Smith volunteered to attend this meeting with the Chair, depending on the date arranged.

It was raised that attempting to remove the fallen branches and trees on Winding Hill would be impossible for any volunteers, since the road would need to be closed for safety. In addition, the landowners are not the same for both sides of the road.

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

Public Rights of Way

Cllr S Smith reported that February had seen a greater than average rainfall with the usual consequences of flooding in certain areas and damp conditions underfoot. This had made walking in the countryside unpleasant for some and it was hoped that a drier March, and Spring growth, would result in a turnaround in the surface of footpaths and bridleways.

Specific PRoW updates were:

- Operation Knockback: Footpaths 33 and 57, around the edge of the golf course, have been successfully trimmed. The steps on Footpath 33 are in need of repair and it is suggested that the wooden frame be replaced with a re-cycled plastic alternative to avoid repeating the repair every two years or so;
- Fallen Trees: all fallen trees have been cleared from Bridleways 53 and 28. Foliage on Bridleway 28 has also been trimmed back between the two gates. Herts County Council's (HCC) contractors will also do something about the very large puddle at that section after visiting that area;
- Footpath 29: at the request of a resident, the top layer of the path re-surfacing between the two bridges, was not laid as the view was expressed that this layer would wash onto their land in the event of heavy rainfall. However, the resulting exposure of the bottom layer of loose and sharp stones is not good for walkers. On advice from HCC, the resident has since changed their mind and HCC's contractors are considering applying a top layer in due course; and
- Footpath 20 Bridge: delays are not expected regarding the installation of the new bridge but there is no evidence yet of the major work starting.

Cllr J Liversage reported that the work on the new bridge would be starting next week. She had been notified as access would be via her drive.

Ash trees at Perry Green

The Chair reported that although it was not clear that the two ash trees were on the Parish Council's common land at Perry Green, a contractor had quoted as follows:

- cutback trees by 40%: £2,400 + VAT; or
- remove trees: £4,300 + VAT.

The Chair was still investigating on whose land these trees were and it was agreed that Cllr J Liversage would get a further quote. In the meantime, the Clerk would submit the tree works form to East Herts Council. In addition, it was noted that ash tree wood was desirable.

River Ash

Cllr B O'Neill reported that the river had been too deep to survey but hoped to be able to do the survey this coming weekend. St Elizabeth's are still interested in analysing the water sample too.

(iii) Highways (inc street lighting)

The Chair reported that arranging a meeting with Herts County Council (HCC) Highways was proving tricky, particularly with an upcoming office move from Hertford to the Stevenage campus.

In terms of specific works outstanding, the Chair reported that:

- the signage relating to the ford is due to be installed soon. An issue had arisen with a gas main in the St Thomas' triangle but an alternative location had been sourced; and
- the documentation for the passing places in Kettle Green Lane was to be finalised shortly which would enable the order to be placed.

Cllr S Smith reported that the position in Watery Lane had not improved – still river-like with some dangerously large potholes.

Cllr I Hunt also reported that a resident had raised concerns with Cllr G McAndrew (HCC) about the recent road closure of the High Street and the resulting diversion. The concerns related to the notification of the works and the diversion using Malting Lane, Oudle Lane and Church Lane. The damage to the lanes has been significant, particularly as these are not designed for vans, lorries or any oversized vehicle.

iv) Media

None.

(v) Security

Based on information from OWL Messaging and PCSO Karen Broad's crime report, Cllr J Liversage reported the following matters:

- a significant increase in crime in Much Hadham over the last month:
 - 7th February -theft of tools from outbuildings at a residential property in Perry Green;
 - between 7th and 8th February - break-in at residential property of 2 outbuildings in South End;
 - 7th and 14th February – theft of a trailer from Kettle Green Lane; and
 - 20th February – burglary at residential property in the High Street. When disturbed they left the area in a vehicle in an unknown direction;
- trail bikes crashing into fences near her property;
- a new 'Neighbourhood Alert' system will be introduced on 1st April 2024 to replace OWL which will facilitate sharing information about cross border crimes and incidents. The link to sign up to this new system will be shared once known; and (After the meeting – new system will be called "Herts Connected")
- Hertfordshire Trading Standards is warning residents to be vigilant about fraudulent apps and QR codes. Victims of such activity unknowingly being signed up to monthly direct debit payments. Suspected fraud can be reported via 0300 1232040 or www.actionfraud.police.uk.

The Chair suggested that, given the change in personnel, PCSO Karen Broad should be invited to a Parish Council meeting.

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

(vi) Stansted Airport

Cllr D McDonald reported that he had been making enquiries given that, despite expectations, the flight plan changes had not been published by Stansted Airport yet.

(vii) Other

None.

24/39. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that The Bull Inn planning application had been included on the agenda for EHC's Development Management Committee (DMC) meeting on 10th April. With agreement from the Parish Council, he would seek to move this application to the May DMC meeting given his expectation that with two large applications already on the April DMC agenda, The Bull Inn application was unlikely to be heard at that meeting.

In response to a question from Cllr J Liversage regarding the empty carpark close to Waitrose in Bishop's Stortford, Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that this carpark had to remain empty as a condition of the contract in place with the operators of the Northgate End carpark. He also expressed his view that it was unlikely that the proposed development of an arts centre would continue given that delays and inflationary increases had made it no longer financially viable.

24/40. RESULTS OF THE PARISH SURVEY

Cllr D McDonald provided feedback from the parish survey results, detailed in Appendix A, relating respectively to a 20 mph speed limit in the village and the future use of the Pavilion. Key points were:

20 mph speed limit

- around twice as many "yes" votes as "no" votes supporting a 20 mph speed limit;
- the common theme amongst the "yes" votes was the current danger to road users and pedestrians, although some suggested limiting the application of a 20 mph limit to parts of the village, particularly the High Street;
- some "no" vote comments reflected more a doubt that a 20 mph speed limit would achieve its aim or be enforced than an objection to the principle of lowering the speed limit;
- overall, clear mandate for the Parish Council to petition Herts County Council for a 20 mph speed limit to be introduced;

Future use of the Pavilion

- approximately 3:1 majority supported exclusive use of the Pavilion;
- some "yes" comments particularly supported a café;
- "no" comments focused on the Pavilion not being available for sporting activities or local hirers, and the strain it would place on the carpark; and
- whilst the majority of "yes" votes for allowing the exclusive use of the Pavilion by a suitable commercial venture was large, Cllr D McDonald highlighted that a number of issues (including planning issues and possible strain on the carpark) would first need to be considered before going ahead.

In discussion, it was agreed that:

- the survey results would be publicised; and

- Cllr I Hunt and Cllr D McDonald will investigate further what would be required for a commercial operator to have use of the Pavilion, including representatives from the Sports Association when necessary.

Affordable housing

Cllr I Hunt reported that a further briefing meeting regarding Hill House would be arranged in order for the Parish Council to be updated on the developer's current ideas for the site and the housing need survey results.

24/41. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

(i) Low cost housing survey results

In response to a resident's query, Cllr I Hunt stated that CDA Herts had undertaken the affordable housing survey on behalf of the developer therefore the results had been provided to them.

(ii) The Bull Inn

A resident asked if the Parish Council would be represented at the Development Management Committee (DMC) meeting hearing The Bull Inn planning application.

Cllr I Hunt stated that he expected he would be, adding that he would be seeking on behalf of the Parish Council for conditions to be applied relating to prioritising the housing for the elderly, the internal refurbishment of the pub and the points included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

In the resident's view, these points were not on the planning application, and reference to them at DMC would confuse the matter. The resident felt that the Parish Council should have negotiated, and obtained agreement, with Punch on these matters prior to this site being included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The resident's view was noted.

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) commented that the current tenant had physically left the pub although their tenancy does not end until the 31st May 2024. It was believed that issues with the lack of pub refurbishment had prompted this move. As a consequence, the kitchen is closed. The expectation is that a new tenant will be found in due course. If the pub were to be put up for sale, it has Asset of Community Value status.

24/42. RISK REGISTER

The Parish Council Risk Register, with amendments highlighted in red, had been circulated with the agenda. Cllr I Hunt stated that he had reviewed the minor changes proposed by the Clerk to the Register and was satisfied that these were appropriate.

RESOLVED to approve the Parish Council Risk Register

24/43. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

The Chair reminded those present that a minor change had been made to the payment listing. The payment amount to the Village Hall had been increased from £22 to £66 (OP295) and a revised list had been circulated prior to the meeting.

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

The Chair reported that contract with the litter picker had been signed.

RESOLVED to authorise standing order payment to litter picker £99.67 per month for the 2024/25 financial year.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS - MARCH 2024

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount
OP293	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Quarterly playground inspection (December)	£60.00
OP294	Herts County Council	SID extended warranty (Minute ref: 22/149)	£1,000.00
OP295	MH Village Hall	Hall hire Jan to Mar 24	£66.00
OP296	FM Forth	Clerk's expenses 1 Mar 23 to 28 Feb 24	£692.94
SO	M Windmill	Litter picking (Mar)	£91.00
OP297	FM Forth	Clerk's salary (Mar)	£833.04
Total payments			<u>£2,742.98</u>

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 were highlighted by the Clerk.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 5 MARCH 2024

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2023	64,058.77	33,469.72	97,528.49
Income	46,869.55	2,335.00	49,204.55
Expenditure	- 37,800.16	- 6,507.19	- 44,307.35
Closing balance	<u>73,128.16</u>	<u>29,297.53</u>	<u>102,425.69</u>

FUND BALANCES

Barclays Bank Business Reserve Account		47.46
Unity Trust Current Account	105,121.21	
Add: Outstanding deposits	-	
Less: Unpresented items	<u>-2,742.98</u>	102,378.23
Total Fund Balances		<u>102,425.69</u>

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

Parish Council closing balance		73,128.16
<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>61,579.76</u>

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

24/44 PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held 6th February 2024 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

24/45 BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held 6th February 2024 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

24/46. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

24/47. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

24/48. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 2nd April 2024 at 7:30 pm at the Much Hadham Village Hall.

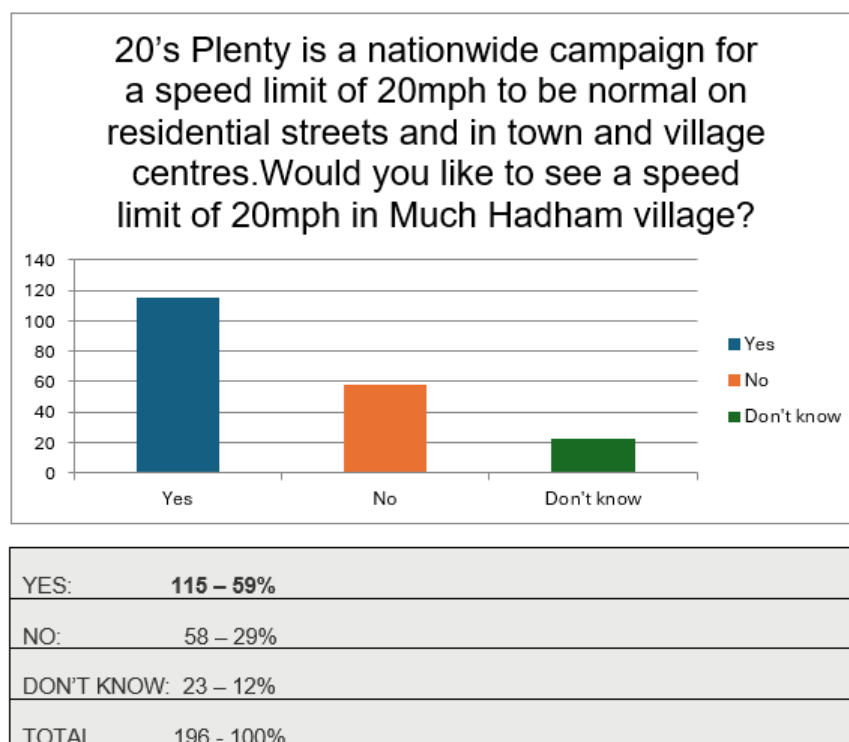
There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:47 pm.

PARISH SURVEY RESULTS

CLlr D McDonald provided feedback on the parish survey results relating to:

- 20 mph speed limit; and
- future use of the Pavilion.

20 mph speed limit



As can be seen, there were almost exactly twice as many “yes” votes as “no”. Just under half of respondents added comments to their “yes”, “no” or votes.

Unsurprisingly, most of the comments which accompanied the “yes” votes focussed on the danger to road users and pedestrians of vehicles passing through the village too quickly. Some were in favour but suggested that a 20 mph limit apply only to the High Street or to the stretch of the High Street near the school rather than to the entire village, whilst at least one respondent thought it should be the other way round. There was also a suggestion that the speed limit should apply more widely, not only to Much Hadham, but also to Green Tye and Perry Green (which is perhaps something the Parish Council needs to come back to in due course).

As regards, the “no” vote, a number seemed not to object to the principle of a 20 mph limit but doubted that it would achieve its intended aim; for example: “you can’t drive faster than 20 mph anyway”; “there is no point in having a 20 mph limit, because drivers would ignore it”; and it would be a waste of time “because it would not be enforced”.

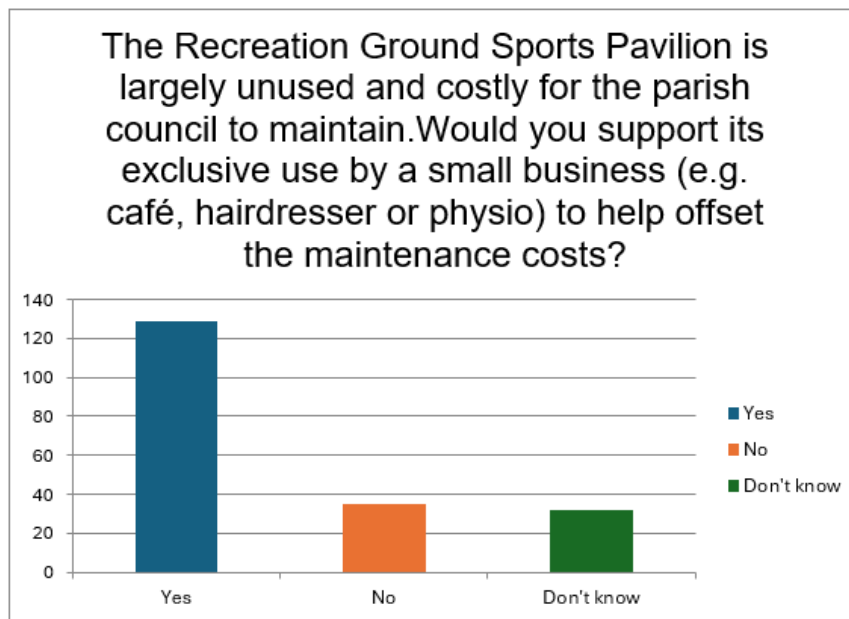
The question for decision is where the Parish Council goes from here.

To wind back, the survey was conducted because the Parish Council supported the idea of canvassing Herts County Council to introduce a 20 mph speed limit in the village but did not want to go ahead without giving the village an opportunity to express its opinion. That has been done and a clear majority opinion has been expressed in favour of the Parish Council proceeding. Although not itself a matter which needs to be brought into account in deciding next steps, it’s fair to add that during the time it has taken to arrange and conduct the survey, the move towards the introduction of 20 mph limits in towns and villages has continued to gather momentum across the country.

Cllr D McDonald suggested, for discussion, that the next step for the Parish Council should be to publicise the results of the survey in the parish magazine, and on the website, summarising the figures in favour of “yes”, “no” and “don’t know”, and to confirm that in light of the clear majority for “yes”, the Parish Council intends to petition HCC for a 20 mph limit to be introduced throughout the village.

Future use of Pavilion

It is worth remembering the precise wording of the question which residents were invited to vote on: whether they would support the exclusive use of the Pavilion by a small business (e.g. café, hairdresser, or physio) to help offset the maintenance costs, even if this meant the loss of the changing facilities and increased use of the car park.



YES:	129 – 66%
NO:	35 – 18%
DON'T KNOW:	32 – 16%
TOTAL	196 – 100%

As can be seen, around 3.7 times as many “yes” votes as “no” - a very large majority. Of the 196 who replied, around one third added their individual comments.

The main concerns expressed by “no” voters were: the prospect of the changing rooms in the Pavilion no longer being available to support sporting activities; the Pavilion no longer being available for local residents to use and hire; and the additional strain which it would put on the car park.

As regards comments made by “yes” voters, a number mentioned that using the Pavilion as a café would have their particular support.

Where does the Parish Council go from here?

A clear majority view has been expressed by the residents of the possibility of giving the Pavilion over to exclusive commercial use, so the Parish Council has a mandate. However, a number of issues would require to be thought through if the Parish Council were to go ahead.

First, planning issues – a major issue. A planning application would be required for a change of use. Before going ahead with an application, the Parish Council would need to be confident in the viability of the project and of the commercial user.

Secondly, can the use of the café as a centre for commercial activity be reconciled with its use as a sporting facility? Clearly, so long as at least one football team is playing at the

Recreation Ground, they will need to have access to the showers. However, it does not appear to be any reason why the teams could not use the external entrances to the showers. They would then have the café available to them for they use once they have finished their games and showered. The position would be more difficult if the commercial venture was something other than a café.

Thirdly, parking. This would require separate but related consideration.

And finally, the Parish Council would need to have in mind that there are some current regular users of the Pavilion, in particular:

- the soup and cheese meetings to be held on the 25th March, and thereafter on the last Tuesday of the month;
- “Busy Week”, usually on the Friday of the last week of July/beginning of August; and
- the community event in September.

Whether special provisions for these events could be made would be a matter of negotiation with potential commercial users of the Pavilion, but Cllr D McDonald’s view is that given the specific terms of the matter upon which residents were invited to vote, realistically the Parish Council would have to be prepared to accept that the commercial operator would require exclusive use of the Pavilion, subject to the arrangement mentioned regarding use of the changing rooms by the footballers during the season.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 5 MARCH 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	674.00	Football sub from 2022/23 (£300); current football sub to date (£250); 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	46,869.55	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	9,844.00	9,996.48	
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	2,790.28	Printing and stationery costs less than expected and most of training budget not used
Legal costs	1,000.00	650.00	
Insurance	2,850.00	2,519.75	Although Parish Council insurance cost higher than expected, Village Hall has not sought any contribution this year
Audit fees	815.00	780.00	Internal Audit fee slightly less than expected
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	7,500.00	5,035.52	Less repair work undertaken than anticipated
Litter	2,000.00	1,092.00	Volume of work less than expected when budget set
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,085.00	830.02	Energy costs lower than anticipated
Pavilion	5,550.00	2,484.50	Energy costs significantly lower than expected, independent cleaner arrangement ended in June and cost of remedial works not yet included
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)	-	-	
SID extended warranty	-	1,000.00	Purchased from Herts County Council as per resolution at September 2022's meeting
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	Will be used to part fund this year's tree work
VAT	5,000.00	1,672.91	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	52,781.10	37,800.16	