

A meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council was held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 19th January 2000 at 7.15 p.m.

Present:	Mr. Poulton	Mr. D. Stock (Vice-Chairman)
	Mr. C. Clark	
	Mr. V. Dunhill	Mr. D. Filer
	Mr. I. Knight	Mrs. H. McCash
	Mr. J. Meischke	

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Singleton and Mrs. Dinnin.

2 Presentation by Alan Neville of WAGN re station matters

Mr. Stock said that further to his action point he had had lengthy discussions with Alan Neville re the problems at Watton-at-Stone station. As a result of this, Mr. Stock decided to invite Alan Neville to this meeting so that Parish Councillors could hear what he had to say and then ask questions.

Mr. Stock then welcomed Mr. Neville to the meeting and invited him to speak.

Mr. Neville said that he had been appointed Group Station Manager in July 1999 and apologised for the previous lack of communication that the Parish Council had experienced. He said that he was eager to develop good relations with this and other Parish Councils and hoped that he could attend future meetings of the Parish Council as necessary.

Mr. Neville then outlined the working relationship between WAGN and Railtrack and the current problems at Watton-at-Stone station. Mr. Neville will be taking the Managing Director of WAGN to visit the local stations in this area, within the next couple of weeks. He also said that he will be taking the Property Manager around the station next week and will identify everything that needs doing.

As a result of the question and answer session, it was agreed to invite Mr. Neville and a representative of the Transport Police to the Parish Council meeting to be held on the 15th March.

- Mr. Neville left the meeting at 7.45 p.m.

Mr. Stock to liaise with Alan Neville re the meeting in March.

Action: D. Stock

3 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15th December 1999**

Mr. Knight proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Contact EH Highways Partnership re sunken CableTel trenches**

Mr. Stock reported that he had spoken to Mr. Koffman of NTL (formerly CableTel) concerning the CableTel trenches. Mr. Koffman said that the trench work sinkage was within acceptable limits. Mr. Stock informed him that he would not accept this statement because NTL had already agreed to have the work carried-out. The only reason that the work had not been done was because NTL's contractors had gone into liquidation. Mr. Stock told him that this was a safety issue and he was therefore not prepared to debate the subject further. Mr. Koffman accepted this and then said that he felt that the footpath in Station Road was in such a bad condition that if NTL carried-out repair works, the whole surface of the footpath would break-up. Mr. Koffman said that he would speak to Mr. Standen (EH Highways Partnership) to see if they could work together to completely resurface the footpath in Station Road.

Mr. Stock to chase progress.

Action: D. Stock

In addition, Mr. Koffman said that most of the footpaths in Hazeldell were in a poor condition as a result of the rehabilitation of the water mains, e.g. he had noted a number of trip hazards.

The subject of footpaths to be placed on next months agenda under specific items, until this matter is resolved.

Agenda: 2/00

Mr. Poulton said that he and Mr. Filer had discussed the condition of some of the resurfacing works carried-out by Three Valley Water's contractors during the recent rehabilitation work in Watton-at-Stone.

After discussion it was agreed to write to Three Valleys Water stating that the Parish Council would like to arrange a suitable date to tour the village, on foot, with one of their representatives to identify the problem areas.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

- **Inform School Governors of Plant a tree event in February 2000**

Mrs. McCash said that she had spoken with the Watton JMI school at the last meeting of the School Governors. However, as there was a busy agenda, no interest was shown in this item.

Mr. Poulton asked Mrs. McCash to raise the subject again at the next meeting of the Watton-at-Stone School Governors.

Action: H. McCash

- **Purchase answer machine**

A Brother fax-930 has been purchased at a cost of £169 including VAT. The machine is a phone/answer phone/fax machine and is also able to produce photocopies. Cornhill Insurance have arranged cover (under the Parish Council's policy) at the Clerk's home.

- **Inspect usage of dog-waste bins on Great Innings**

Mr. Poulton reported that there is a problem of dog-fouling in Mill Lane. EMM Decor have been calling out the dog-warden on a regular basis (for some time) to have the dog-waste removed.

Mr. Poulton said that he had inspected the site two days ago and found 20 deposits between the Mill Lane bridge and the bollards. Dog-fouling notices have now been put up in the area.

Mr. Poulton said that he had suggested to EMM Decor that, if they were willing to sponsor a bin, the Parish Council may agree to have it emptied weekly (at a cost of £125.40 per year, from April). It was agreed that a written request be sent to EMM Decor asking them to donate a dog-waste bin for Mill Lane.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

EMM Decor are to place a notice in the Parish News about the dog-fouling problem in Mill Lane.

Mr. Poulton reported that he had inspected the dog-waste bins on the Great Innings estate. The bin on the left-hand side of the Wimpey Homes site, near the bungalows, is now on such a small area of land that it is unlikely that will have much use, even when the housing development has been completed.

It was agreed that this bin be relocated to footpath 17, between the school and Glebe Close.

Action: N. Poulton

A letter to be sent to the Dog Warden (at EHDC) asking him to visit EMM Decor in Mill Lane between 3-5 p.m. on a weekday and sit at one of their windows so that he can witness (and if necessary, take action) the dog-fouling.

The Dog Warden also to be asked to visit the school on a weekday at 8.45 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to meet with parents when they take and collect their children from the school.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Purchases two dog-fouling notices at £10 each**

Mr. Poulton reported that a letter had been sent to Mr. Bob Kiff, (EH Highways Partnership) asking to purchase two dog-fouling signs. However, he had subsequently met with Mr. Kiff, who suggested that the Parish Council use the (free of charge) stickers, as they are virtually vandalism free. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.

- **Inspect damage to Community Hall roof**

This item to be discussed under item 4 a, Community Hall Trustees - Community Hall roof (on page 5 of these minutes).

- **Accept Mr. Stanley's quote for levelling and grass seeding on Watton Green**

This action point has been completed.

- **Check LEAF grant details for expiry date**

Mr. Filer confirmed that the expiry date for the LEAF grant is the 31st March 2000.

- **Letter of thanks to Tony Bradford**

This action point has been completed.

- **Ask Mr. Standen to pursue a traffic-calming scheme across the railway bridge**

This item to be discussed under item 4 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Traffic-calming and safety of crossing in Station Road (on page 6 of these minutes).

- **Contact Mr. Alan Neville of WAGN re rubbish at station**

This action point has been completed. (Refer to item 2 on page 1 of these minutes.)

- **Write to EHDC re planning application 2 Whitehouse Close**

This action point has been completed.

- **Ask for planning extension for 27 Bramfield Road, Datchworth to the 6th January 2000**

This action point has been completed.

- **Contact Datchworth Parish Council re planning application for 27 Bramfield Road**

Mr. Poulton said that he had been in contact with Datchworth Parish Council. He then read our letter (dated 6th January 2000) to the planning department as follows.

‘Thank you for your letter of 9th December 1999.

It is the policy of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council to resist any further encroachment on Metropolitan Green Belt land unless there is a particularly strong case for it.

It is our view that this proposal, as submitted on 9th December and supplemented by Barry Turner’s letter of 19th December 1999, does not make such a case. The size (base 12m x 6m, height 7.3 m) of the proposed barn is excessive for a field of 2.3 ha and its presence in a prominent position on Green Belt land would be intrusive.

Although the site of the proposed building is technically just within the Watton-at-Stone parish, its impact would be felt more by those in Datchworth. We fully support the views already put forward by Datchworth Parish Council and the Datchworth Society.

In conclusion, we urge you to refuse this application.’

Mr. Poulton said that the applicant had not realised that he was causing so much upset to his neighbours and will now be withdrawing his application.

- **Write to EHDC re planning application at corner of High Street and Great Innings**

This action point has been completed.

- **Send cheque for £100 to Youth Club**

This action point has been completed.

- **Investigate Fly-tipping at Broom Hall Farm and determine the appropriate action**

Mr. Poulton reported that he had inspected the site and the area of the fly-tipping is not the responsibility of EHDC. Therefore a letter has been sent to WAGN asking them to inspect the site and take the appropriate action. However, Mr. Neville (WAGN) has informed the Parish Council that this is the responsibility of the property department at Railtrack.

The Clerk to write to Railtrack accordingly

Action: J. Allsop

- **Write to the Chief Constable re Mrs. Knight’s letter concerning Neighbourhood Watch**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write to Mr. Heald (MP) copying him correspondence re Neighbourhood Watch**

This action point has been completed.

- **Contact Mr. Monk re leaf clearance work**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write to John Prescott & HCC in support of CPRE concerns re additional new houses in Hertfordshire**

This action point has been completed.

- **Pass a copy of the CPRE request to the Conservation Society**

This action point has been completed.

- **Place the CPRE request on all notice boards**

This action point has been completed.

- **Fill salt bin outside 93 Great Innings South**

This action point has been completed.

4 Specific items

a) Listed buildings

This item was deferred from the Parish Council meeting held on 15th December 1999, because it was felt that there were not enough Parish Councillors present at the meeting to make a decision on the subject.

After discussion, it was agreed by all present that in this instance we should not become involved in the subject of listed buildings.

b) Distribution of train and bus timetable

Mr. Poulton thanked all Parish Councillors for distributing the train and bus timetables throughout the village. A special timetable will soon be issued for Whempstead, which Mr. Clark will arrange to distribute.

c) Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Mr. Poulton said that he was very disappointed to report that Mrs. Barbara Knight had resigned from the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and other co-ordinators had also left. There are only three remaining co-ordinators in the whole village, namely Dave Clark of 112 Hazeldell, Jim Hall of 11 Rivershill and Mr. Frank Salmon of 115 High Street.

Mr. Poulton said that our MP, Mr. Oliver Heald, had written (on the 14th January) thanking the Parish Council for their letter concerning Watton Watch and informing us that he had immediately taken up the matter up with the Assistant Chief Constable and will be in touch with us again shortly.

Mr. Poulton said that he has asked Mrs. Knight to attend Oliver Heald's next surgery in Watton-at-Stone (on Saturday 19th February 2000) so that she can speak to him directly.

After any remaining expenditures have been paid, the remaining funds from Watton Watch will be handed over to the Parish Council for safe keeping.

It was agreed that a notice be placed in the Parish Magazine stating that Neighbourhood Watch are looking to expand and are seeking new members.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

d) Walkern Road bridge

Mr. Stock said that at last month's meeting Mr. Knight had commented on some serious visibility problems on the Walkern Road bridge and it was agreed that this specific item should be placed on the agenda for the January meeting. Mr. Stock then asked Mr. Knight to outline his concerns.

Mr. Knight said that the main point for concern is for drivers entering the village, where visibility of on-coming traffic is very poor, especially during daylight hours.

After much discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Knight write to David Standen (EH Highways Partnership) and arrange a site meeting to see what can be done to improve the situation.

Action: I. Knight

This item to remain on the agenda under specific items.

5 Reports**a) Sub-Committees****Budget & Finance**

- **9 - monthly statement of accounts**

All Parish Councillors have been copied with the 9-monthly statement of accounts for the period ending the 31st December 1999.

Mr. Knight said that the 9-monthly statement shows that Parish Council spending is in-line with the budgeted figures.

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Poulton reported on the following items concerning the Community Hall Trustees.

- **MPPA - Grant**

Mr. Poulton said that he had heard from Awards For All (National Lottery) who informed him that the maximum grant money available to any one organisation in a year is £5,000. The Community Hall has already received a grant of £1,775 (i.e. for the blinds in the pavilion, and for the painting of the Main Hall), which leaves a remainder of £3,225. There are two options open.

1. Apply for a grant of £3,225, the result of the application will be known by March 2000.
2. Wait until September 2000 to apply for the full amount, with a decision on the application being made in February 2001.

Mr. Poulton said that applications for grants from the Groundwork Trust need to be submitted in March, with a decision being made in April 2000.

Applications for an EHDC grant need to be made before the 15th July 2000, with a decision being made in September 2000.

Mr. Poulton reminded Parish Councillors that the cost of the re-surfacing work is £10,634 + VAT, plus an additional £1,184 for the drainage and timber work. The Parish Council has £6,000 available for the

re-surfacing work on the MPPA. If the Awards For All grant aid the project £3,225, there is a shortfall of £1,409, plus £1184 for the drainage and timber work.

After discussion it was agreed that the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Trustees take the following action.

1. Apply immediately to Awards For All for a grant of £3,225
2. Apply to the Groundwork Trust for additional funding in March 2000
3. Apply to EHDC for the remaining funding before 15th July 2000.

Mr. Poulton to act accordingly.

Action: N. Poulton

Mr. Poulton said that, hopefully, the work on the MPPA will be able to start during September at the latest and may be earlier.

- **Community Hall roof**

Mr. Poulton reported that he and Mr. Meischke had not yet inspected the roof because they are awaiting dry weather so that they can use a watering-can to trace the leak.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Meischke

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **Housing of the litterpick bin**

Nothing to report.

- **Brushes for cleaning changing rooms**

Mr. Meischke said that he had been trying to get in contact with the Football Club re the purchase of brushes and shovels for the changing rooms. Mr. Poulton said that the home-team changing room had a brush, but not a shovel.

Mr. Meischke will continue to pursue this matter.

Action: J. Meischke

Environment

Mr. Stock reported on the following items concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **War Memorial**

Further to his report at the Parish Council meeting held on the 15th December 1999, Mr. Stock confirmed that another load of gravel is required to complete the War Memorial scheme. Approximately a metric ton would be required at a cost of about £50-£60.

Mr. Stock to liaise with Mr. Filer with regard to funding this from the LEAF grant.

Action: D. Stock/D. Filer

- **Positioning of Memorial seat on Sportsfield**

Mr. Stock reported that he had met with Mrs. Freeman on the sportsfield to discuss the location for the seat in memory of her grandparents.

The location preferred by Mrs. Freeman is near the MPPA, i.e. between the hedge and steppingstone footpath to the MPPA.

Parish Councillors had no objection to this location, provided it allows for the easy access for both hedge cutting and the cutting of the sportsfield grass. Mr. Stock said that the installation and base would be similar to the seat at the southern-end of the High Street opposite the War Memorial.

Mr. Stock to inform Mrs Freeman accordingly.

Action: D. Stock

- **Village Pump**

Mr. Filer reported that he had now received Jeff Skidmore's revised quotation (dated 18th January 2000) separating the cost of treating the woodwork and all other work on the pump, as follows.

- Remove grass and weeds from base
- Apply weedkiller as required
- Pressure wash paving stones
- Cement gaps between paving stones total £180 + VAT

- Pressure wash woodwork
- Rub down all woodwork and treat with preservative as agreed total £200 + VAT

It was agreed that a letter be sent to Jeff Skidmore advising him that because Mr. Abel Smith has offered to carry-out the treatment of the woodwork (at no expense to the Parish Council), we only want him to carry-out the other work as per his estimate of £180 + VAT. The work to be completed before the end of February.

A letter also to be sent to Mr. Abel Smith accepting his offer to carry-out the treatment of the woodwork.

Action: D. Filer/J. Allsop

Mr. Filer reported that Richard Monk of 64 High Street, has been piling leaves against his hedge, which backs onto the Village Pump. Now that the leaves on the hedge have died back, the heaps of leaves are falling onto the area surrounding the Village Pump.

Mr. Filer to contact Mr. Monk to ask him to deposit his leaves in a different area of his garden and to clear up the site.

Action: D. Filer

• **Traffic-calming and safety of crossing in Station Road**

Mr. Stock reported that he had written to Mr. Standen asking him to prepare a draft proposal for a “traffic-calming” scheme on the bridge in Station Road, based on that already installed on the Walkern Road bridge. Mr. Stock has asked for the plans to be produced prior to the Parish Council meeting to be held on the 16th February. Mr. Standen has agreed to do this. Mr. Stock to chase.

Action: D. Stock

• **Watton Green**

Mr. Stock reported that he had received the following letter from Liz Heath (HCC) dated 12th January.

‘With the end of the financial year rapidly approaching, I would appreciate confirmation that I will receive the relevant paperwork from yourself before the 31st of March 2000 with respect to the outstanding £453.31 assigned to your project. If you anticipate that you will not require this money could you let me know ASAP so that I can assign it to another organisation and project. Thank you. With kind regards.’

Mr. Stock to discuss this matter with Liz Health to ensure that we do not lose the grant outstanding.

Action: D. Stock

Mr. Stock then outlined the design and dimensions of the information board to be sited on Watton Green. The main structure of the information board will be substantial and made so that it can be easily assembled on site. The estimated cost of the basic structure is £126 + VAT, with some of the materials being given free of charge by Countryside Management Services. The remaining work outstanding will consist of the artwork for the information panel. This may be quite expensive.

Mr. Dunhill suggested that any shortfall in money could be made up from the Parish Council Millennium fund.

Mr. Stock to liaise with Quenton Kelly (Countryside Management Services) to arrange for the framework to be machined and delivered to us.

Mr. Filer said that the spare piece of oak timber, left over when making the rustic seat on Watton Green, is currently being stored in his garage.

i) **Report**

Mr. Knight carried-out the sportsfield report on the 16th January, the result of which is as follows.

• **Sportsfield:**

- Condition of grass OK.
- Litter Some.
- Dog-waste bin and fouling OK.
- Netball posts OK.
- General Good - White-lining seems effective. Fence between horses field & playing field, near MPPA, needs repair.

• **Children’s Playground:**

- Condition of surface Not bad.
- Litter/Litter bin In use - some litter.
- Large swings OK.
- Small swings OK.
- See-Saw OK.
- Slide OK.
- Comments Area good.

• **Community Hall:**

- General Condition (Exterior) Mud on paths around building.
- Litter bin In use.
- Car Park OK.
- General OK.

- **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**
 - Surface OK - leaves in all four corners.
 - Boundary Fencing OK.
 - Tennis nets One in use - new handle needed.
 - Litter OK.
 - General OK.
- **Great Innings Play Area:**
 - Equipment OK.
 - Surfaces OK.
 - Litter None.
 - Dog-waste bin and fouling Some fouling.
 - Comments Good condition.
- **Allotments Area:**
 - Access OK.
 - Condition of paths between allotments OK.
 - Condition of Allotments under cultivation OK.
 - Condition of Allotments not under cultivation Overgrown.
 - Litter OK.
 - Comments -
- **Culverts on Mill Lane**
 - Litter and rubbish in and around culverts None.
 - Dog-fouling None.
 - Comments OK.
- **Salt bins**
 - Perrywood Lane Some salt - in unstable condition.
 - Great Innings OK.
 - Station Road Some salt.
 - Moorymead Close OK.
 - Hazeldell Full, but solid.
- **General Comments**
 - Salt bins Should be restocked at start of cold weather - in all of the bins solid.
 - Lammas field Near Mill Lane gate - electrical junction box in broken condition?
- **Lammas field - electrical junction box**

Mr. Poulton said that he had reported the damage to the junction box to Mr. Standen (EH Highways Partnership).

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) Corner of High Street and Great Innings

Associated landscape plans for application to build twelve terraced houses
 Parish Councillors studied the landscaping plans. No response is required by the Parish Council.

ii) Watton-at-Stone Primary School, Rectory Lane

Proposed retention of double mobile classroom unit (for use by the Watton-at-Stone Playgroup)

This HCC application was discussed by Parish Councillors and no objections were raised.

The Clerk to inform HCC that the Parish Council has no comment on this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Decisions

i) 57 Hazeldell

Single-storey front extension
 -EHDC - permission granted

7 Correspondence received

a) Watton-at-Stone Youth Club - Letter of thanks for grant aid

Mrs Jeanette Williams has written to thank the Parish Council, on behalf of the Youth Club, for the £100 cheque towards their running costs.

b) Dr. Norden (10 School Lane) - Traffic implications, reinstatement of bollards & resurfacing of School Lane

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter from Dr. Norden letter (dated 3rd January) to Bryan Hammond, County Councillor.

'Proposed development off School Lane, Watton-at-Stone

You may recall that I wrote to you on the 15th November about traffic implications of the above. You kindly copied the letter to Mr. Heywood, Area Highways Manager. So far I have had no reply or acknowledgement.

I think the letter which raised a number of legitimate concerns. Many of these have also been raised by the 175 local people who petitioned the Planning Department on this matter and I think some sort of reply is justified.

Thank you for following this up.'

Dr Norden also asked Mr. Poulton if the posts and surface on School Lane will be reinstated soon.

Mr. Poulton then read out his reply to Dr. Norden.

'I thank you for copying me in on your letter to County Councillor Bryan Hammond. I will also chase Mr. Alex Heywood to ensure you get a response to your letter of the 15th November 1999.

Can I assure you that the Parish Council will ensure that the two sets of posts will be reinstated as soon as possible and the resurfacing of School Lane is carried out to County Council standards.'

Mr. Dunhill said that he had spoken to EH Highways Partnership re this matter and will chase them accordingly.

Action: V. Dunhill

c) CPRE - Safer country lanes

CPRE has asked the Parish Council to write to the Prime Minister (by the 14th January) asking central and local Government to move beyond recognising the problem of traffic intimidation, to actually acting to reduce it. They then specified the following, which in their opinion, is what it should mean (and what the Parish Council should support).

- Reducing the nation 60 mph limit to 40 mph limit on country lanes (c and unclassified roads);
- all villages should be safe villages - with a lower speed limit to enable people to go about their daily business in safety;
- providing local authorities with new powers to designate 'Quiet Lanes' where walkers, cyclists and horse riders have priority over motorist, without banning them;
- the development and greater use of traffic calming techniques which blend with the character of the countryside, rather than clutter it;
- significant improvement to the enforcement of speed limits; and
- increased funding for sustained public education campaigns on the dangers of speeding in rural as well as urban areas.

This item was discussed and Parish Councillors differed in their views with respect to the above bulleted list. It was agreed that if the Parish Council were to make a response it would require discussion at a separate meeting (because we cannot automatically send such a letter without the agreement of Parish Councillors). However, because the suggested deadline for the letter had already gone, it was agreed that no response be made. Instead, a letter to be sent to CPRE to inform them that if they wish the Parish Council to support countryside issues, then they require a longer timescale to respond to such matters. In this case, the Parish Council was given under two weeks to respond and part of this time involved the Christmas and New Year holidays. Thus, Parish Councillors had been unable to arrange a meeting to discuss this item and therefore no letter of support could be sent to the Prime Minister.

Action: J. Allsop

d) Mr. Ian Harris (Grey House, High Street) - grassed area between the Grey House and the flats in Great Innings

Mr. Poulton reported that Mr. Harris has copied the Parish Council with his letter (dated 2nd January 2000) to Stort Valley Housing Association as follows.

‘I am enclosing a copy of a letter to you from the Clerk to Watton-at-Stone Parish Council dated 15th July 1998. Unfortunately I have heard nothing further in the matter.

The purpose of this letter is two fold. First, I would like to receive a reply. Secondly, I wonder whether in principle your Association would be interested in disposing of its interest in or ownership of the land. Subject to establishing the principle, I would be prepared to seek to negotiate a price.

I look forward to hearing from you.’

The piece of land in question is the small grassed area between the corner of the Grey House and the flats. This area is being regularly used for parking cars, causing the grass to die and, in wet weather, turning the area into a mud bath. Cars parked in this area also obstruct the view for those entering and leaving the car park for the flats.

Mr. Poulton said that the disposal of this land is the responsibility of EHDC.

A letter to be sent to Mrs. Symth (Stort Valleys Housing Association) stating that Martin Shrosbree (EHDC) will be pursuing this matter. **Action: J. Allsop**

e) Mr. Ward (The Old Chapel, Whempstead) - re condition of roads in Whempstead

Mr. Clark read out Mr. Ward’s letter (dated 3rd January) as follows.

‘We have corresponded in the past about the state of the road in Whempstead. Unfortunately matters do not seem to improve. Despite the inconvenience of closed roads to deal with flooding, the road still floods, there is mud and debris all over the road as a consequence of hedge trimmings and no clearance of the debris and there are now major pot holes between the Old Chapel and Whempstead cross roads.

It really is time some positive action was taken. Not only is the road dangerous from a road safety view point but the wear and tear on privately owned vehicles is at an unacceptable level. Action please.’

Mr. Clark said that, in the five years that he has lived in Whempstead, he has seen the traffic increase on this road; particularly by drivers using it as a short cut from the A602. The remedial works in the area to alleviate flooding have not worked.

Mr. Poulton asked Mr. Clark, as the Parish Council representative for Whempstead, to write to Mr. Standen (EH Highways Partnership) and arrange a site meeting to see what can be done to improve the situation. **Action: C. Clark**

f) Aston Parish Council - 2000 Inter Parish Conference

An invitation has been received from Aston Parish Council to attend the 2000 Inter Parish Conference on 1st March 2000.

The two main topics on the agenda are:

1. Community Safety Partnerships
2. The problems of high traffic-volumes on narrow lanes & ‘rat runs’.

For both of these topics, officers from higher authorities have been invited. However, there will also be an opportunity to raise other issues.

Mr. Poulton asked Parish Councillors to inform the Clerk before the end of January, if they wish to attend the meeting. **Action: Parish Councillors**

The Clerk to inform Aston Parish Council how many Parish Councillors will be attending. **Action: J. Allsop**

g) Mr. M. V. Parmer - re proposed development Watton Road Datchworth

Mr. Poulton read the following letter (dated 11th January) from Mr. Maurice Parmer of 1 Raffin Park, Datchworth.

‘It has recently come to my notice that a parcel of land has been sold in this area, the intended use of which should be a matter of great concern to all who reside in Watton or Datchworth. It is rumoured that this land is to be used for ‘leisure pursuits’. All concerned should know whether or not the intended use of the site will give rise to noise pollution - for example, for clay pigeon shooting or motor cycle scrambling.

Watton would be much affected by noise, being downstream of the prevailing wind direction. Datchworth and Watton as a whole should seek guarantees that no further development of the site be made unless its exact final usage be exposed for local reaction.

The site, I am given to understand, is off the Watton Road and would be little more than half a mile from the Datchworth crossroads and not much more than a mile from the west side of Watton. Attending traffic could cause another problem on what is a minor but busy road.

I should welcome the comment of both Parish Council on this matter.'

After discussion it was agreed to write to Mr. Maurice Parmer informing him that we would be very concerned about any development for leisure pursuits that would cause noise pollution and excessive traffic in and around our Parish. However, no action can be taken at this stage until a formal planning application has been received for the site.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

h) Brian Hammond (County Councillor) - Proposed new housing in Hertfordshire

Mr. Poulton read out Mr. Hammond's letter (dated 11 January 2000) as follows.

'Thank you for your letter and for enclosing a copy of your letter to John Prescott. I can assure you of not just my support, but that of my group colleagues at County Hall in resisting the housing numbers proposed by the Crow Report. Fortunately there are signs of the Government backing away from this report.'

Mr. Poulton then read out Mr. Oliver Heald's letter (dated 14 January 2000) on the subject.

'Many thanks for your letter. I certainly agree with the points which you make in your letter to John Prescott.

I have campaigned against these proposals and indeed earlier proposals for large scale building in our County, and will continue to do so.

I have immediately written to John Prescott, pressing our case.'

Mr. Poulton reported that the Government does appear to be backing-down on its proposals for a large number of additional new houses being built in Hertfordshire. One large site still remains in their proposals, this is airport related. There may also be small developments in Hertford and Ware.

8 Reports from other Organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone JMI School**

Further to a recent letter received, the school be asked to clarify their requirement for a grant from the Parish Council.

Action: H, McCash

- **River Beane Restoration Association**

Mr. Knight reported that the Environment Agency has, following consultation, decided to close the Whitehall extraction pumping station and re-locate it in Hertford. The water extracted in Hertford will then be piped back to the Whitehall treatment works.

A significant improvement in the flow of the River Beane should be seen within the next three to four years.

- **Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society**

Mr. Stock said that he was not present at the meeting and asked Mr. Dunhill to report instead.

Mr. Dunhill said that Mr. Abel Smith has agreed that part of the Millennium Walk can pass through his field, adjacent to the Watton by-pass.

The Conversation Society will meet again in February to agree the final details of the walk.

- **Watton 2000**

Mr. Poulton reported that he had been in contact with Phil Berry concerning the reproduction of the Watton video 'Peep into the Past'. Mr. Berry is able to reproduce 150 videos at £1.00 each, plus 50p for the cover.

It was agreed that the Parish Council ask Mr. Berry to reproduce a 150 videos and covers.

Action: N. Poulton

The videos will be offered for sale at £5.00 each during the year, including the May Fayre and Millennium Truck Pull.

9 Accounts/Correspondence

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Payments

Mercury - October to December 6.54
6.54

Receipts

Sale of tapestry leaflets 1.20
1.20

Cheques required

Youth Club	Donation		100.00
D. Chandler	Xmas bonus		10.00
C. Bewley	Xmas bonus		25.00
J. Allsop	Xmas bonus		50.00
J. Allsop	Cartridge for laser printer		34.84
J. Allsop	Brother fax machine from John Lewis		169.00
HCC	Photocopy paper, labels, post it labels		48.06
K. Jones	60 hours litterpick		254.40
D. Chandler	8 hours litterpick		33.92
J. Allsop	-January salary	420.80	
	-Cable phone calls to 4/01/00	<u>21.51</u>	<u>442.31</u>
			<u>1167.53</u>

Cheques received

MAFF	Countryside Stewardship Scheme - payment for 98		<u>246.10</u>
			<u>246.10</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Payments

Stamps for grant application 1.14
Care Group 238.53
Mop head + flash liquid 23.24
VAT due for period 5/99 * 15.01
277.92

Receipts

Floodlighting 74.00
Amy Clark - Pavilion hire 21.00
Mr. Murphey - Main Hall 4.00
C. Straker - Main Hall 34.00
133.00

Cheques required

Three Valleys Water	period ending 20/12/99		101.50
D. Chandler	4 hours work		16.96
Mrs. C. Bewley	32 hours cleaning		160.00
EHDC	Rates - due 1/00		<u>86.00</u>
			<u>364.46</u>

Cheques received

Tennis Club	Main Hall hire		<u>90.00</u>
			<u>90.00</u>

* This item was paid by the Clerk who did not claim reimbursement at the time (6/99).

Mr. Poulton proposed that the accounts be paid, Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

10 Chairman's / Clerk's Report

Mr. Poulton reported on the following correspondence received.

- **Planning**

- **Blue Bury Farm, Walkern Road**

- Agricultural dwelling

- Application withdrawn

- **Summer Play Scheme 2000**

- EHDC has requested the use of the pavilion facilities at the Community Hall for the Summer Play Scheme 2000 between 24th July and 18th August.

- After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed that EHDC can use the pavilion facilities subject to us receiving a deposit of £100 before any bookings is confirmed.

- The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **EHDC - Public car parks within Watton**

EHDC is seeking information detailing the location and capacity of public car parks whose minimum capacity is for twenty cars. They require this information to identify methods of sustainable countryside access (as indicated in their recently publicised East Herts Cultural Strategy).

EHDC to be informed that Watton-at-Stone does not have any such public car parks. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Letter from Mrs C. Dinnin**

Mr. Poulton read out a letter from Christine Dinnin (dated 17th January) as follows.

‘I am writing to tell you that I shall be unable to attend the next three Parish Council meetings as I will be attending a computer course at Bishops Stortford for the next twelve weeks.

I am very sorry about this and of course I shall be able to attend sub-committee meetings on other days. I hope that this will not cause too much inconvenience.’

Parish Councillors agreed that this was not a problem.

- **Countryside Stewardship scheme**

Ms Debbie Byrne (MAFF - Countryside Stewardship Scheme) has written stating that further to our Annual and Capital Claim Form, which they received in October 1999, they had agreed to reduce the number of trees scheduled to be planted in 1998/1999 from 145 to 140.

MAFF has sent two copies of the revised schedule (number 4) for capital works and request that, if the Parish Council are in agreement, both copies are signed by the designated signatory (currently Nigel Poulton) and one copy is returned to them. This was agreed by the Parish Council and Mr. Poulton signed the revised schedule. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Victim Support, East Hertfordshire**

Mr. Poulton reported that he had received a letter (dated 13th January 2000) from Mrs. Pamela Filer, Chairman of Victim Support East Herts. Victim Support East Herts. provides practical advice and emotional support to victims of crime ranging from theft, criminal damage and burglary, to serious violent assaults including sexual and domestic assaults. Over the past year they have helped and supported 30 victims of crime in the Watton-at-Stone area. Mrs. Filer’s request is for financial support from the Parish Council for urgently needed funds to cover training costs and out of pocket expenses, including travelling costs.

After discussion some, it was agreed by all present to donate the sum of £50 to Victim Support East Herts on the understanding that the money will be put towards the help and support of victims living in Watton-at-Stone. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

- **The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 16th February 2000.**