

Minutes of the meeting of the Wotton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 15th January 2008

Present: Mr. J. Meischke (Vice-Chairman) Mrs. C. Dinnin
Mr. D. Filer Mr. I. Harris
Mr. I. Knight Mr. M. Smith
Mr. D. Stock The Clerk (Mrs. J. Allsop)

Public: Mr. M. Oakman and Mrs. B. Taylor (of Beane Road)

In the absence of Mr. Poulton, Mr. Meischke chaired the meeting.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. N. Poulton, Mrs. McCash and Mr. Clark.

2 Public Participation

Item 6 a i, Planning Application - 14 Beane Road, discussed directly following item 3, Declaration of Interests under item 3 a.

3 Declaration of Interests

Mr. Knight declared a personal interest in item 6 a i, Planning Application - 14 Beane Road (Mr. Knight lives adjacent to the property involved).

Mrs. Dinnin declared a personal interest in item 6 a i, Planning Application - 14 Beane Road (Mrs. Dinnin lives in the same road as the property involved).

Although she is not covered by the code of conduct, the Clerk declared a personal interest in 6 a i, Planning Application - 14 Beane Road (The Clerk lives in the same road as the property involved).

a) Public Participation

Members of the public were invited to speak about the proposed development at 14 Beane Road. Their main concerns were over-development, overloading of the sewer, access and traffic movements (including the current Taxi business) to the existing property.

- **6 a i, Planning Application - 14 Beane Road, Wotton-at-Stone (3/07/2491/FP)**

New two-bedroom bungalow with room in roof

Although Mr. Knight had declared a personal interest in the application, he had been the Parish Councillor responsible for showing the plans to residents affected by the application in both Beane Road and Walkern Road and therefore clarified certain aspects of the current application to the Parish Council. Planning permission to build a five-bedroom house was refused in April 2004 and permission to build a four-bedroom dwelling was subsequently refused in October 2004. A further application to build a three-bedroom house was withdrawn in mid 2007.

Mr. Meischke summarised the contents of letters of objection copied to the Parish Council by residents of Beane Road and Walkern Road. The main objections concerned the overdevelopment of the site, potential increase in traffic movements along the access road from 14 Beane Road onto Beane Road itself, the overloading of the sewer system and the disruption caused by vehicular movements associated with the Taxi business at the existing property.

Parish Councillors looked at the plans and agreed to write to East Herts Council informing them that the Parish Council strongly objects to the above application for the following reasons.

- It is an inappropriate level of development in an area of special restraint.
- It is an overdevelopment of the site.
- Restricted site access.

Also, in the light of the strong objection by the Parish Council and the representations made by residents of Beane Road and Walkern Road, the application should go before the Planning Committee and not be decided by officers.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

4 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th December 2007**

The following amendment was made to the minutes of the meeting.

Page 9, item 11, Reports from other Organisations - Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup, first line

'Mrs. Dinnin reported that the Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup held has held its Winter Warmer and made a profit in excess of £500.

Should read

'Mrs. Dinnin reported that the Watton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup has held its Winter Warmer and made a profit in excess of £500.'

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

b) Review of actions

- **Chase Zurich Village Halls Plus Group re quotation for insurance**

Zurich can provide a quotation that is valid for 60 days only. Therefore, they will submit their quotation for insurance cover for the Community Hall after 1st February 2008.

The Clerk to chase after that date.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Give 'Exclusion of Press and Public' minute to the Parish Councillors not present at the meeting:** completed.
- **Return Alliance & Leicester change-of-signature forms for the Parish Council accounts:** completed.
- **Contact Mrs. McCash re writing to the Chief Constable concerning Neighbourhood Watch issues:** completed.
- **Contact Mrs. McCash before writing to the Doctors' Surgery re overhanging foliage**
Refer to item under 7 b, Specific items - Overhanging foliage along the wall of the Doctor's Surgery garden.
- **Contact Don Chandler to ask him if he would be willing to do the watercolour for the webpage**
Refer to item 7d, Specific items - Watton-at-Stone web site.
- **Investigate the availability of appropriate domain names for the Watton-at-Stone website**
The Clerk has purchased two domain names, www.watton-at-stone-herts.co.uk and www.watton-at-stone-herts.org.uk. Both these addresses are linked to the Watton-at-Stone website.
- **Ask Ted Brown to inspect and tidy the area around the Village Pump on a regular basis:** completed.
- **Write to all contractors who submitted quotations for work in 2008:** completed.
- **Write to the Sports and Social Club re annual review of hire charge:** completed.
- **Return completed Precept form to East Herts Council:** completed.
- **Investigate the cost of having a building-valuation done on the Community Hall**
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees - Valuation of Community Hall.
- **Arrange to lay the new Badminton-Court tape**
Mr. Stock said that he needed to arrange for some help to lift the old tape and then lay new court-markings. He will therefore report back to the Parish Council when the task is completed.
- **Investigate the cost of having the window-closing problem resolved and replace any unserviceable strip-lights**
Mr. Meischke said that he and Mr. Poulton had investigated the problem, which is due to over-stretched cables in the window-closing system. He has tried to rectify the problem but there seems to be no way of shortening the over-stretched cable. All of the high-level windows can be closed individually so they are not the problem. Quotations are being sort for replacing either one or both of the window-closure systems in the Main Hall.
This item to remain on the agenda (under Community Hall Trustees) until the problem has been resolved.

Agenda: 02/08

- **Chase Tony Bradford re purchase of trees for the Cottage Site:** outstanding.
Mrs. Dinnin said that she had been unable to contact Mr. Bradford this week because he was away from his office. However, she is expecting him to call her on Thursday 17th January for an update.
- **Accept Blue Bury Contractors quotation for treatment of the nettles on the Lammas:** completed.
- **Inform Adam Welch that he can lay wood chippings along the Lammas footpath:** completed.
- **Ask Ted Brown to clear car-park drain:** completed.
- **Pass the Policing Plan to Mrs. McCash for her comments:** completed.

Refer to item under 7 a, Specific items - Response to Hertfordshire Police Authority Policing Plan.

- **Give comments on Policing plan to Mr. Filer:** completed.
Refer to item under 7 a, Specific items - Response to Hertfordshire Police Authority Policing Plan.
- **Send a donation of £25 to the River Beane Restoration Association:** completed.
- **Write to East Herts Council Street re its Naming and Numbering policy:** completed.
- **Contact Pre-School Playgroup re usage of MPPA for fundraising event:** completed.
Mrs. Dinnin said that the fundraising event at the MPPA had been shelved for the time being.
- **Write to the Clerk re the annual review of her salary:** completed.
An 'exclusion of press and public minute' concerning the Clerk's salary review to be attached to these minutes. Mr. Filer to write the 'exclusion of press and public minute'. **Action: D. Filer**

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

None.

6 Planning

a) Applications

i) 14 Beane Road, Watton-at-Stone (3/07/2491/FP)

New two-bedroom bungalow with room in roof

This item was discussed following item 3 a, Public Participation.

ii) 81 Great Innings North (3/08/0033/FP/CT)

Two storey rear extension and single storey rear extension

Mr. Meischke read out a letter of objection from Richard Singleton, who lives in the adjacent property.

Councillors looked at the plans and agreed to write to East Herts Council informing them that the Parish Council objects to the above application for the following reasons.

- Excessive overdevelopment of the site
- The level and degree of development is not in keeping with the other properties in the area

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

i) 23 High Street (3/07/1979/FP/SD)

New front porch

-East Herts Council permission granted

ii) 16, Moorymead Close (3/07/2342/FP/HS)

Conversion of garage to living accommodation

-East Herts Council permission refused

Reasons for refusal:

The loss of a parking space within this small cul-de-sac is likely to lead to increased parking either on-street or on the frontage of the site. If permitted, the proposal would create a precedent for other similar developments within the cul-de-sac leading to further deterioration in the appearance of the locality and the visual amenities of neighbouring residents, contrary to the aims and objectives of Policy ENV9 of the East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

iii) 117-119, High Street (3/07/2291/FP/HS)

Conversion of detached garage into a single one bedroom residential unit

-East Herts Council permission refused

Reasons for refusal:

The proposal would result in overdevelopment of the site by virtue of the cramped and congested layout, and the poor relationship with adjoining development. As such, this form of development would be out of keeping with the pattern of surrounding development and the character of the Conservation Area. It would therefore be contrary to policies ENV1 and BH6 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

7 Specific items

a) Response to Hertfordshire Police Authority – Policing Plan 2008-2011

Mr. Filer proposed that the following letter be sent to Ian Laidlaw-Dickson (Chairman, Hertfordshire Police Authority).

'Thank you for giving our Parish Council the opportunity to comment on the above policing plan.

Our comments are as follows:

1. In "Protecting vulnerable People" some mention should be made of distraction burglaries which are very common with elderly people.

2. In the tables of targets and objectives there are a number of suggested activities where reduction targets are given as x%, these should be quantified.
3. No targets or objectives are given to expand the support given to the Neighbourhood Watch Organisation.
4. In mentioning the upgrading of support for young people, some mention should be made of parental control.

We hope that our comments are useful.'

Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Filer said that he had highlighted the first two comments in the letter and the second two had been highlighted by Mrs. McCash.

b) Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Watch

Mrs. McCash was not present at the meeting to report on this item.

c) Overhanging foliage along the wall of the Doctor's Surgery garden

The Clerk wrote to Watton Place Clinic on 21st December asking them to cut back the growth overhanging the Station Road footpath adjacent to Watton Place Clinic.

Parish Councillors were unable to report if this has now been done or not.

This item to remain on the agenda.

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d) Watton-at-Stone web site

The Parish Council's new website designed by Peter Allsop is now live on-line and therefore viewable to all members of the public who have access to the internet.

Mr. Meischke asked all Parish Councillors to view the new website and make any comments during the February meeting.

The Clerk to contact all organisations asking them to submit an up-to-date entry for the website. Mr. Knight will contact all the organisations within the Sports and Social Club.

Action: J. Allsop/I. Knight

It was agreed to form a working group to review and develop the content of the website. Mr. Meischke, Mr. Stock, Mr. Knight and Mr. Harris volunteered to be members of that working group.

Mr. Harris said that the historic village events, which are basically extracts from the village guide, need to be rewritten for the purpose of the website. He also said that the Benington website was excellent and particularly easy to navigate, as well as being well written.

The Clerk left the meeting.

Parish Councillors agreed to give Peter Allsop £100 in appreciation for the work he has undertaken on the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council website.

e) Agree meeting dates for the Civic Year

It was agreed that Parish Council meetings shall continue to be held on the third Tuesday in the month, with the exception of May (which will held on the second Tuesday in the month), namely:

- Tuesday 13th May 2008
- Tuesday 17th June 2008
- Tuesday 15th July 2008
- Tuesday 16th September 2008
- Tuesday 21st October 2008
- Tuesday 18th November 2008
- Tuesday 16th December 2008
- Tuesday 20th January 2009
- Tuesday 17th February 2009
- Tuesday 17th March 2009
- Tuesday 21st April 2009

Mr. Filer said he objected in principal to the May 2008 meeting being brought forward by one week but had managed to re-arrange a previous engagement he had arranged for 13th May. Mr. Poulton had asked for the meeting to be brought forward because he will be on holiday and therefore would not be able to present his Parish report.

The Parish Council meeting on the 13th May 2008 will be preceded by the Annual Parish meeting (starting at 1900) and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

f) Emergency Plan

Mrs. McCash will present the Emergency Plan during the March 2008 Parish Council meeting.

This item to remain on agenda as a reminder.

Agenda 02/08

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items concerning the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Receipts

Village Guides

2.00

2.00

Payments

None

Cheques required

T. Brown	32 hours litterpick	224.00
Post office	Inland Revenue – Tax and NI	186.51
St. Albans Diocesan Board of Finance	Allotment rent	300.00
River Beane Restoration Association	Donation towards running costs	25.00
SLCC	Annual; Subscription	102.00
Russell Scanlan	Allotment liability insurance	82.95
J. Allsop	2 domain names-13.86, yellow paper-2.49, memory stick-4.99	21.34
J. Allsop	January salary	<u>579.63</u>
		<u>1521.43</u>

Cheques received

Sports & Social Club	Hire of sportsfield facilities – 6 months rent	<u>575.00</u>
		<u>575.00</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Floodlighting to 02.01.08

60.00

Watton Dots & Tots – Pavilion hire

42.00

Gill Gilbey - Main Hall

20.00

122.00

Payments

Hosepipe

6.98

6.98

Cheques required

Rosemary Brown	24 hours cleaning	156.00
H. M. Customs & Excise	VAT return 11.07	114.61
G. Corbett	Repair of car park brick wall	480.00
G. Smith	Window cleaning	56.00
Hertfordshire County Council	Cleaning materials	70.25
Withers Thomas	Valuation of the Community Hall	<u>293.75</u>
		<u>1170.61</u>

Cheques received

Watton Ramblers	Pavilion hire	7.00
Sports & Social Club	Hire of Community Hall facilities	575.00
		<u>582.00</u>

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council approves the above payments. Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- **Valuation of Community Hall**

Mr. Filer read out a letter, dated 9th January, from Withers Thomas valuing the Community Hall for £610,000 and the boundary wall at £25,600 for insurance purposes.

A copy of this letter is attached to these minutes.

See attached

It was agreed to ask Zurich Village Halls Plus Group to take these figures into account when submitting their quotation.

Action: J. Allsop

- **9-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of the 9-monthly statement of accounts for the period ending the 31st December 2007.

Mr. Filer went through the expenditure and income items for both the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts and explained the variations in the statements. The main expenditure item in the Parish Council accounts is the transfer of £5,000 to the Community Hall account, which is reflected in the Community Hall income-figure.

The Community Hall income from hirings is looking healthy, following our advertising campaign at the beginning of 2007.

- **Investigate obtaining a credit card for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Mr. Filer agreed that purchases made over the internet are often cheaper than conventional purchases and the only means of payment is usually by a credit or debit card.

It was agreed that it was wrong to expect the Clerk to use her own credit card to make on-line payments on behalf of the Parish Council and Community Hall. However, if we obtain a credit or debit card then we are relying on the Clerk (who is also the Proper Officer of the Council) to act responsibly.

Parish Councillors agreed that we should investigate obtaining a credit or debit card for use by the Clerk.

Action: D. Filer/J. Allsop

- **Hertfordshire Highways – street lighting charges**

Hertfordshire Highways have written (undated letter) to advise us that there will be a small increase in maintenance charges, due to inflation, with effect from 1st October 2007. Energy charges will remain unchanged until September 2009.

Mr. Filer confirmed that there are sufficient funds in the budget to allow for the increase in maintenance costs.

Community Hall Trustees

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

- **Report and minutes on meeting held on 2nd January 2008**

The following amendment was made to the minutes of the meeting.

Item 4, Acoustics for the Main Hall, 1st line of the 2nd paragraph.

‘Mr. Poulton to ask Mr. Turner if he can delivery the panels to us before 14th January.’

Should be

‘Mr. Poulton to ask Mr. Turner if he can deliver the panels to us before 14th January.’

Mr. Knight proposed that the minutes as amended be accepted and signed. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- **Security Camera System**

Mr. Meischke said that he is still waiting for the two CCTV contractors to get back to him re the specifications for a system at the Community Hall. The delay is due to the close of business over the Christmas period.

Most CCTV contractors are used to proceeding with contracts upwards of £10,000. The two estimates received are between £1,000 and £1,200 but have slightly different specifications and are basically for one infrared camera with recording equipment. The systems would be capable of supporting up to four infrared cameras. However, what confidence would we have that the images taken would be able to identify people on camera. Mr. Meischke said he would like to see an installed system before we proceed further.

During the last two years vandalism at the Community Hall has cost us approximately £1,000.

After discussion, it was agreed to shelve the idea of installing CCTV at the Community Hall for the time being, but to keep the current estimates on file.

- **Valuation of Community Hall**

This item was reported on under Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items concerning the Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **Sportsfield development**

As reported during the December meeting of the Parish Council, the Glebe Committee’s decision re our request to lease additional land for sporting facilities is expected in early 2008.

- **Sports and Social Club hire agreement**

Mr. Knight proposed that Colin Straker, as Chairman of the Sports & Social Club, be given two copies of the sportsfield hire agreement for signature, to cover the period 1st April 2008 o 31st March 2009.

Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Action: I. Knight

- **New tennis court**

Refer to the minutes of the Community Hall Trustees meeting held on 2nd January 2008.

Environment

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following item concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Watton Green**

The encroachment clearance-work is almost finished and the site looks very good. Mr. Stock reminded Mr. Smith of the location of the small amount of clearance work outstanding

Mrs. Dinnin asked Parish Councillors to visit the site and give her their views on the newly installed access gate. There is a large gap on the left-hand side which could allow vehicular access onto Watton Green. This could be filled in by extending the ditch or installing a wooden post.

Action: Parish Councillors

Mr. Filer asked for care to be taken if the ditch is extended because the water-main to his property is in this area and was damaged some years ago when the original ditch was excavated.

b) Routine reports

i) Fire-alarm test

The fire-alarm was tested before the start of the meeting.

ii) Monthly village-report

Mr. Knight completed this report on the 13th January 2008, the result of which is as follows.

- **Sportsfield:**

Condition of grass	Good.
Litter	Good.
Dog fouling	Good.
General	Rubbish at edge of field near Wilson’s hedge.
- **Children’s Play Area:**

Condition of surface	Good.
Litter/Litterbin	Good.
Large swings	Good.
Small swings	Good.
See-Saw	Good.
Rainbow multi-play and slide	Good.
Two spring sit-on	Good.
Teen shelter	Good.
General	Good.
- **Bike ramps area:**

Junior Jump	Good.
Double Ramp	Good.
Fun Box	Good.
- **Community Hall:**

General Condition (Exterior)	Some mud – the time of year!
Litterbin	Good.
Car Park	Good.
General	Good.
- **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**

Surface	Good.
Boundary Fencing	Good.
Tennis nets	Good.
Litter	Good.
General	Good.
- **Great Innings Play Area:**

Equipment	Good.
Surfaces	Good.
Litter	Good.
Dog fouling	None.
Trees	Good.
Comments	Good.
- **Allotments Area:**

Access	OK.
Condition of paths between Allotments	OK.
Condition of Allotments under cultivation	OK.
Condition of Allotments not under cultivation	OK.
Litter	OK.
Comments	OK.
- **Culverts on Mill Lane**

Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts	OK.
Dog-fouling	OK.
Comments	Footpath marker post on Lammas down. Needs reinstating.

- **Salt bins**
 - Perrywood Lane OK.
 - Entrance to Great Innings OK.
 - Great Innings South – outside number 93 OK.
 - Station Road OK.
 - Moorymead Close (2) OK.
 - Hazeldell OK.
 - Footpath 17 OK.
- **Dog-waste bins**
 - Footpath 17 OK.
 - Sportsfield OK.
 - Church Walk OK.
 - Walkern Road OK.
 - Station Road OK.
 - High Street (by Memorial) OK.
 - Great Innings OK.
 - Mill Lane OK.
 - Opposite 5 School Lane OK.
- **War Memorial**
 - Comments Good.
- **Ornate Village Sign**
 - Comments Good.
 - Post Good.
- **Rubbish on sportsfield**
 - It was agreed to ask Ted Brown to clear the rubbish on the sportsfield. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Footpath marker on the Lammas**
 - Mr. Knight said that one of the way-marker sign posts on the Lammas is down because the post is rotten.
 - Mrs. Dinnin to inspect the post and arrange for it to be repaired/replaced. **Action: C. Dinnin**
- iii) **Weekly sportsfield-report and action**
 - Ted Brown reported a broken light-bulb in one of the outside toilets, this has now been replaced.

9 Correspondence received

a) Letters from local residents re planning application at 14 Beane Road

Refer to item 6 a i, Planning applications - 14 Beane Road, Watton-at-Stone (3/07/2491/FP).

b) Countywide upgrade of School Crossing Patrol sites

Hertfordshire Highways wrote on 9th January informing us of their plans to upgrade the School Crossing Patrol site in Station Road. The objective of this upgrade is to improve the safety of the Patrol and the children crossing the road near the entrance to Hazeldell.

Improvements include installing two new school warning signs with wig-wag lights (i.e. flashing lights) adjacent to the entrances of Rectory Lane (exiting the village) and the storage site (entering the village). New road markings will be laid and existing road markings, which are already in poor condition, will be left to fade.

c) Letter re nuisance from a house in Great Innings

An anonymous letter has been sent to the Parish Council complaining about the residents of a property in Great Innings.

It was agreed that because the author of the letter is unknown, the Parish Council had no alternative but to ignore it.

10 Reports from other Organisations

None.

11 Items for Parish News

The following items to be sent to the Editor of the Parish News for inclusion in the next issue (February).

- Watton-at-Stone website
- Parish Council meeting dates for the Civic Year 2008/09
- New school crossing

The Clerk to write the entry accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2112.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 19th February 2008.**