

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 14th July 2009

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

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Poulton and Mr. Clark.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Declaration of Interests

None.

4 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Meischke had two additional items for this meeting.

- **Letter from Stop Bennington Wind Farm Committee**
This item to be discussed under 9 e, Correspondence received.
- **E-mail from Philip Howell re use of Main Hall**
This item to be discussed under item 9 f, Correspondence received.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th June 2009**
Mrs. McCash proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Write to EHC re playground inspection: completed.**
- **Write to George Bateman re voluntary work in the local community: completed.**
- **Contact George Bateman re painting of benches and posts**
Mrs. Dinnin met with George Bateman today. His Duke of Edinburgh Award voluntary work must not exceed 13 hours. Mrs. Dinnin has therefore asked George Bateman to clean and paint three benches rather than six. This was agreed by Parish Councillors present.
Mr. Meischke to purchase a wire brush to help with the cleaning of the benches and appropriate protective clothing. **Action: J. Meischke**
- **Obtain all the materials required for painting benches and posts: completed.**
- **Attend Oliver Heald MP's surgery on 20th June to discuss trees in Watton-at-Stone**
Due to a last-minute problem, Mr. Stock was unable to meet with Oliver Heald MP at his surgery as planned. However, Mr. Heald subsequently wrote to Mr. Sock to inform him that he had asked the Transport Minister why such high fees apply in these circumstances (i.e. re the quotes passed to us for tree planting). Mr. Stock was sad to report that the answer received from the Department of Transport appeared not to answer the question at all. The following is an extract from the Department of Transport's letter:

‘.....Mr. Goutam raises the issue of the costs associated with a proposed tree planting scheme within the parish. Unfortunately, services provided in this way do attract a charge. Hertfordshire County Council who have the responsibility for highways in Hertfordshire have set out two options for the proposed tree planting scheme, both of which have associated costs. It would appear that option 2 may be the most cost effective. It is for the Parish Council to consider the two options and decide which they wish to pursue.’

Mr. Stock was frustrated by this and by the references to ‘tree-planting schemes’ when we are talking about Hertfordshire Highways replacing a single tree that died as a result of their actions. He was also disappointed by Mr. Goutam's remarks about not being able to find any record of the tree in question, when in fact he and Mr. Stock had stood next to it during at least one site meeting in the past.

All those present at the meeting agreed with Mr. Stock's frustration and his concerns about why it is proving so difficult to have a single tree replaced and that this episode was not a good pointer for the future of trees within our village.

Mr. Stock to write to Oliver Heald MP to update him on the current situation (including our apparent success with East Herts Council re replacement trees for the Great Innings pay area). This to include references to the apparent lack of admission of responsibility and help from Hertfordshire Highways, and an attempt to reach a compromise (i.e. we fund the tree and they plant it). The letter to be copied to Mr. Goutam and Mr. Brian Hammond. **Action: D. Stock**

Mr. Stock to write a similar letter to Mr. Goutam. **Action: D. Stock'**

- **Chase Watton school re website entry: outstanding.** **Action: C. Clark**

- **Contact P. J. Fencing to find out when the work to the MPPA fencing will be done**

P. J. Fencing contacted Mr. Knight last week and said that the fence repairs would be done within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Filer said that there is a large hole in the wire fencing at the MPPA. Mr. Knight to investigate.

Action: I. Knight

The Clerk to give Mr. Knight a copy of P. J. Fencing's quotation.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Ask Brian Bunyan to supply a quotation for work to the ornate village sign and its post**

Mr. Meischke read out the following estimate (dated 12th July) from Brian Bunyan.

'Village sign

To supply labour only to clean and rub down with fine sandpaper the above sign and coat with two coats of varnish as required.

Includes coating supporting post with Sadolin.

Cost of above between £75 and £95 depending on the time taken plus the cost of any materials I have to supply.'

Mrs. McCash proposed that Mr. Bunyan's estimate be accepted. Mr. Filer seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to inform Mr. Bunyan accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Collect new Allotment sign and arrange for it to be installed**

Mr. Meischke has collected the new sign and will liaise with Mr. Smith re its installation.

Action J. Meischke/ M. Smith

- **Write to planning inspectorate re Wind Farm application on land off High Elms Lane: completed.**
- **E-mail all Parish Councillors the Wind Farm planning appeal correspondence: completed.**
- **Give all holiday dates to the Clerk: completed.**
- **Resend Article to the Parish News re Major Incident Emergency Plan: completed**

- **Speak to Adam Welch re best location for the Maple tree**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Adam Welch is currently away on holiday and had not yet informed her where the Maple tree would be best located.

- **Contact Mrs. Goodacre re her donation of a Maple tree**

Mrs. Dinnin will contact Mrs. Goodacre when Adam Welch has confirmed where the Maple tree would be best located.

- **Investigate possibility of electronic diary for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Mr. Meischke asked Peter Allsop to set up a Google Calendar for the Parish Council and the Community Hall. This has now been done and all Parish Councillors will be e-mailed their user name and password within the next few days.

Action: J. Allsop

Currently, Mr. Meischke and the Clerk are the only persons able to input and change data on the Parish Council and Community Hall calendars.

- **Send completed annual return and paperwork to BDO Stoy Hayward LLP by 19th June: completed.**

- **E-mail Mr. Filer comments and additional items for the Risk Assessment Register**

Refer to item 8 a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee - Risk Assessment Register for the Parish Council and Community Hall Trustees.

- **Accept Harden Elite's quotation for cleaning of the Pavilion, kitchen toilets and corridor: completed.**

- **Contact City Roofing re lead flashing and broken tiles: completed.**

Mr. Meischke said that the work was done today.

- **Ask Cricket Club to ensure that they leave the Community Hall clean and tidy after use**

Mr. Knight said that the Sports and Social Club would relay to the Cricket Club the Parish Council's concern about the condition of the changing rooms and kitchen after their use.

- **Ask Adam Welch to apply weed-killer around the War Memorial**

Although Mrs. Dinnin asked Adam Welch to apply weed-killer around the War Memorial, the work has not been done. Mrs. Dinnin to chase Adam Welch on his return from holiday. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Send grant of £100 towards the running cost of the Parish News: completed.**
- **Write to Churches Serving Watton re Community Service: completed.**
- **Inform Watton School that the Watton Youth Drop Inn needs more volunteers to help run the club: outstanding.**
- **Order set of Community Hall keys for Watton school**
The Clerk has ordered the keys from Laidlaw Solutions.
The Clerk to arrange for a Chubb key to be cut for the lower main door lock. **Action: J. Allsop**
- **Write change of Chairmanship article for the Parish News: completed.**

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Complete Whempstead section for the new website: outstanding.** **Action: C. Clark**
- **Complete Neighbourhood Watch section for the new website**
Mrs. McCash said that she has been keeping Mr. Stock updated on her progress of this item.
This item to remain an action point. **Action: H. McCash**
- **Write Healthcare sections for the new website**
Mr. Stock has agreed to write the Healthcare section for the new website using information supplied by Mrs. McCash. **Action: D. Stock**

6 Planning

a) Applications

- i) Blue Hill Farm, Walkern Road (3/09/0874/FP)

Conversion and extension of farm buildings into 5 residential units; 1 no. 5-bedroom, 2 no. 4-bedroom and 2 no. 3-bedroom homes with integrated garages and private gardens

The Parish Council have received letters objecting to the above planning application from numbers 2 and 4 Blue Hill Cottages.

Mr. Knight said that he had shown the plans for this application to the neighbouring residents. He said that these latest plans show two major changes to the plans already granted for this site.

- a) The storage area is now a stable block
- b) The Waste -collection area is located adjacent to existing properties.

Demolition work associated with the new development is complete and the building of the new farmhouse has begun.

After discussion, it was agreed to write to the planning department repeating our objections of May 2005 re the development at Blue Hill Farm as follows.

1. The proposed development would increase traffic at a dangerous junction, namely Blue Hill Farm, High Elms Lane/Walkern Road.
2. The development is within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
3. This is an over development of the site.

Also, that the Parish Council strongly objects to the change of use of the storage area to a stable block. This is too close to the existing property at number 1 Blue Hill Farm Cottages. Also, the waste-collection area is adjacent to existing properties, which we feel is unacceptable, especially taking into account the planned fortnightly collection services due to be introduced by East Herts Council this autumn. This facility would be better located closer to the Walkern Road side of the new development.

The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council also supports the views of the residents who have objected to this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Appeal

- i) 1 -3 Mill Lane

Removal of planning condition 11 (working hours) planning ref. 3.08/0679/FP

-The Planning Inspectorate – Appeal upheld

This item to be placed on circulation. **Action: J. Allsop**

7 Specific items

a) Website

Mr. Stock said that it was pointless to delay any further whilst waiting for the sections outstanding/in-progress to be made available and therefore planned to go live with the first edition of the new website within the very near future, hopefully within the next 3 weeks. However, before this can be done, he needs to review the current contents in detail to check for any errors and/or obviously out-of-date information. This

first edition still requires further work on the graphics, e.g. the current banner is temporary, and further photographs are yet to be added at various points throughout the site.

He also said he and Peter Allsop had agreed that we needed to ensure that the Clerk and at least one Parish Councillor are able to update and add to the material on the website to ensure that it is maintained in an accurate state; otherwise it becomes of no use. Peter will not be involved in such routine update/maintenance activities.

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When the new website goes live (and the current version archived), Mr. Stock will write an item for inclusion in the next edition of the Parish News. This text will also be displayed on our notice boards.

Action: D. Stock

Mr. Meischke said that at some point we need to consider identifying an independent IT person/consultant to take care of the maintenance and repair etc. of the Parish Council's computer hardware and software.

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b) Parish Council electronic diary

This item was discussed under item 5 b, Review of actions - Investigate possibility of electronic diary for the Parish Council and Community Hall.

c) Request for dog bin to be installed at the Church end of Church Walk

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Poulton has received a request, from a member of the public, that a dog-bin be installed at the Church end of Church Walk.

Parish Councillors agreed in principal to the request and agreed to write to East Herts Council asking them to install a metal dog-bin as requested.

Action: J. Allsop

d) Awarding of the Good Citizenship trophy and the Cup for Outstanding Effort at the Community Service

Mr. Meischke reported that Mr. Poulton awarded only one of these trophies during the Community Hall service on Sunday 5th July, as follows.

- The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Outstanding Effort Award was presented to Kirsty Bunce. This award is to a member of the Watton-at-Stone Scout and Guide Beaver or Rainbow group (ages 5 to 8 years).

Unfortunately, Emily Kingslake, the recipient of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Good Citizenship trophy was not present at the Community Hall service. This trophy is awarded to a Year 6 child (aged 11 years) who, in the opinion of the staff, has been the best citizen during their whole time at the School. Mr. Poulton presented the trophy to Emily at Watton-at-Stone school.

Keep-sake trophies were presented with the awards.

e) Pick-up the new Allotment sign and arrange for it to be installed

This item was discussed under item 5 b, Review of actions – Collect new Allotment sign and arrange for it to be installed.

f) Riparian rights booklet

Mr. Poulton has obtained a supply of the Environment Agency’s booklet called ‘Living on the Edge’. This booklet is a guide to the rights and responsibilities of riverside occupation.

Parish Councillors agreed that copies of the booklet should be given to all residents living adjacent to the River Beane, with the exception of the Abel Smith properties. **Action: J. Meischke/ M. Smith/C. Dinnin**

g) Request for Memorial bench

Alan Beadle contacted Mrs. Dinnin regarding a memorial bench he would like to install (in memory of all the deceased Beadle family) after the railway bridge in Church Lane and going towards Hawkins Hall Farm. Mrs. Dinnin informed Mr. Beadle that he would need to seek permission from the landowner, the Abel Smith Estate.

h) Wasps nest on sportsfield

Mr. Meischke received several reports of a wasps nest on the sportsfield, between the large Oak tree and the Rectory. After inspection, and because it is now the school holidays, Mr. Meischke and Mrs. Dinnin agreed to ask Fred Burnell to exterminate the wasps nest; and this work has now been done.

Parish Councillors agreed with this decision.

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council
Petty Cash

Receipts

None
Cheques issued

BSWW Parish News
 Ted Brown
 Mobile stationery and printing
 J. Allsop
 J. Allsop
 J. Allsop
 Ted Brown
 BSWW Parish News
 Frank Cooper and Son Limited
 1st Call Signs
 N. Poulton
 J. Allsop
 Post Office

Payments

None

Photocopying of annual reports (excluding paper) 98.00
 Strimming and mowing 100.00
 Paper to print annual reports 13.46
 June salary 711.13
 Monthly allowance 23.00
 Phone charges to 03/06.09 18.95
 21 hours litter picking 159.60
 Annual grant 100.00
 June grass cutting 188.60
 Allotment map 55.20
 Sadolin, sandpaper, paint brushes 75.14
 Concord trophies, engraving and 2 keep-sake trophies 49.77
 Tax and NI 384.84
235.75
2213.44

Cheques received

East Herts Council Litterpick grant 1170.37
1170.37

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Floodlighting to 09.06.09 40.00
 Jim Keen – Main Hall 120.00
 Donna Eversley - Main Hall & Pavilion 45.50
 Circle Anglia – Pavilion 8.00
213.50

Payments

A. P. Access – fit 2nd new changing room lock 40.25
 Rosemary Brown – 18th, 20th, 21st, 22nd May 36.75
 Rosemary Brown – 24th, 27th, 28th, 29th May 36.75
 Rosemary Brown – 3rd, 4th, 5th June 29.40
 Rosemary Brown – 10th, 11th, 12th June 29.40
 Rosemary Brown – 17th, 18th, 19th June 29.40
 Vat return 05/09 33.58
235.53

Cheques issued

Brian Thompson 27 hours cleaning 198.45
 J. Meischke Broom for kitchen 4.03
 John Phillips Toilet opening from 06.04.09 to 03.07.09 89.00
 Hertfordshire County Council Cleaning materials 51.51
 Herts Fire Protection Annual fire inspection plus new equipment 158.73
 Hardgen Elite Industrial cleaning of toilets, changing rooms and corridor areas 138.86
640.58

Cheques received

Mrs. Hunt Main Hall and Pavilion hire 39.00
 Watton Drop Inn Donation for supply and fitting Main Hall lock 97.69
 East Herts Council Pavilion hire – elections 128.00
 H M Revenue and Customs VAT rebate for March and April 2009 1063.52
1328.21

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

• **Quarterly accounts - Parish Council and Community Hall**

Mr. Filer went through the expenditure and income items for the Parish Council and the Community Hall accounts. He explained that the first-quarter accounts are not a good reflection of 25% of the year's income and expenditure. For example, the Precept is paid twice a year, representing 50% of the total income and seasonal expenditure items such as grass cutting do not occur during the winter months.

Mr. Filer highlighted some of the items that are over the expenditure budget.

- The Clerk's salary will be over-budget for the year due to the agreed increase in her salary after the 2009/10 budget was set.
- The cost of electricity and gas for the Community Hall are both considerably over budget for this time of year. Mr. Filer registered his concern that this expenditure would go well over the annual budget.
- The lighting energy costs should reduce in autumn this year. Currently Hertfordshire County Council is tied into a one-year contract for electricity, which was set when electricity charges were at their highest.

The Community Hall's Main Hall and Pavilion hiring income combined is over 38% of the annual budget. However, because of the summer holidays, the second quarter will be considerably lower.

Because the bank statements for this period will not be received for several weeks, these accounts are draft statements only.

• **Quarterly inspection of accounts**

Mrs. McCash carried out her quarterly inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts on the 24th June. She reviewed bank payments and receipts for both the Parish Council and the Community Hall and also reviewed both Petty Cash books and found all to be in order. Her next inspection will be in September 2009.

At the same meeting, Mrs. McCash discussed with the Clerk the possibility of having a running bank balance to avoid the current accounts becoming overdrawn. The outcome of this discussion was that Mrs. McCash would talk with Mr. Knight to discuss this matter further. **Action: H. McCash**

• **Risk Assessment Register for the Parish Council and Community Hall Trustees**

Mr. Filer received comments on the draft Risk Assessment Register from Mr. Knight and Mr. Stock.

Mr. Filer had also identified an additional item for the Risk Assessment Register under 'other income/expenditure'.

The following items to be added to the Risk Assessment.

Other income / expenditure	Insufficient money in current account	M	Clerk to maintain dummy current account	Clerk to check monthly
Play area	Equipment is faulty and may cause injury. Fault in safety surface	L/M	Report during monthly inspection & carry-out annual external safety inspection	Clerk to Diary Contractor to repair
MPPA	Kicker boards insecure and cause injury	L	Monthly inspection	Contractor to repair
Lammas and Watton Green	Dangerous branches and fallen trees causing injury	M	Regular periodic inspection by tree surgeon	Adam Welch to be asked to carry-out 6-monthly inspection
Parish Council Benches	Damaged or vandalised seats causing injury	L	Periodic 6-monthly inspection	Clerk to Diary

Mr. Filer to send all Parish Councillors a copy of the revised Risk Assessment Register asking them to make any further comments before the end of July. **Action: D. Filer**

This item to be placed on the September agenda for final approval. **Agenda 09/09**

It was agreed to ask Adam Welch to quote for inspecting and reporting on the condition of the trees on the Lammas and Watton Green twice a year. **Action: C. Dinnin**

This item to be added to the Parish Council Google calendar. **Action: J. Allsop**

The Parish Council bench seats to be added to the 6-monthly check. **Action: J. Allsop**

• **Annual reports**

Mr. Filer said that this year it cost over £100 to copy and delivery the annual Parish Council and Community Hall reports to all residents of Watton-at-Stone and Whempstead (i.e. £88 for photocopying, £10 for delivery and £13.46 for the photocopy paper).

After discussion, Mr. Filer proposed that a copy of the annual reports from 2010 onwards are put on the village notice boards and on the Watton-at-Stone website. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Copies of the annual reports from 2000 to 2009 and already available on the current Watton-at-Stone website.

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

• **Report on meeting held on 6th July 2009**

• **Replacement External Door**

Mr. Meischke is in the process of obtaining quotations for a new steel door, the approximate cost will be £700 to £1000, including a steel doorframe, fixtures and fitting.

It was agreed to ask Brian Bunyan to quote for installing a new hardwood door. **Action: J. Meischke**

If necessary, a second quotation for a hardwood door will be obtained. However, Mr. Meischke said that he would not be able to obtain a second quotation for a steel door because he has only been able

to find one manufacture who supplies the grade of steel door we require. The other manufactures only supply heavy-duty steel doors, which are very costly.

- **Request from Beane Valley for play area to be fenced off**

Mr. Poulton received the following e-mail, dated 26th June, from Lif Bishop (Beane Valley Children’s Centre).

‘The parents who come to our groups have asked if there is any possibility of the play area around the play equipment being fenced off. They are concerned about dog mess and feel that the children would be more secure if there was a fence. Most play areas are enclosed these days.

Is this something you could pursue for us please?’

Mr. Poulton has spoken with Lif Bishop about the problem and the main concern is that some of the children are frightened of dogs.

More than 20 years ago, the play area did have fencing around it. However, it was fraught with problems, the footballers repeatedly knocked down the fencing, and it was eventually removed.

The Trustees discussed the problem and agreed that there were several problems with installing a fence. Firstly, it would make the cutting of this section of sportsfield hedge very difficult. The height of the fence would also be an issue and could be a safety problem particularly to football players running into the fence. In addition, it would be very costly to install the fencing.

The Trustees recommendation to the Parish Council is not to install fencing around the play area. This was agreed by Parish Councillors present.

The Clerk to notify Lif Bishop accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **New hose reel for Changing Room**

The hosepipe in the visitors changing room is damaged and making the area damp.

The Trustees agreed that this problem would be resolved by purchasing a new hosepipe with reel and fitting it in the changing room.

Mrs. McCash proposed that a hosepipe with reel is purchased. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

- **Pavilion blinds**

The Pavilion blinds are coming to the end of their serviceable live. A budget provision needs to be made to enable the blinds to be replaced in the near future.

Budget 2010/11

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following items.

- **Changing rooms**

- The Parish Council have reported two incidents when the changing rooms were left in an unsatisfactory state to the Sports and Social Club.

In the first instance, the Cricket Club left beer glasses and cricket kit in the Community Hall. Last weekend, Mr. Meischke retrieved a further three beer glasses. He is keeping a list of the problems that are occurring and will talk to Wilf Emsley if they continue.

- Beane Valley Children’s Centre is expanding their activities from September and need storage space at the Community Hall. If we are unable to accommodate their request, they may be forced to find an alternative venue.

The Trustees agreed that one of the referee changing rooms could be made available as storage space because this facility is rarely, if ever used. Mr. Knight agreed at the Trustees meeting to clarify the usage of the referee changing room with the Football Club.

Mr. Meischke read out the following letter (dated 10th July) from Mr. Knight, in his capacity of secretary of the Sports and Social Club.

‘The proposal to change the use of the “away referees changing/shower room” into a store for the Beane Valley Children’s Centre was discussed at the last Management meeting.

No problem is seen with the plan, with the following proviso.

The changing room will be needed by a team if they reach a semi final of a cup game. The FA requires a separate room for the referee and for the linesmen. This has happened twice in the last two years but the games have been played away.

If this were to happen, the Sports and Social Club can move the stored items into another room (say the meeting room) for the occasion.’

Parish Councillors agreed that the Beane Valley Children’s Centre could use the referees changing room for storage on the proviso outlined in Mr. Knight’s letter.

Beane Valley Children's Centre to be notified accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Environment

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **War Memorial**

This item was discussed under 5 b, Review of actions - Ask Adam Welch to apply weed-killer around War Memorial.

- **Allotments**

Mrs. Dinnin said she inspected the Allotment area today. She is waiting for Adam Welch to return from holiday so she can arrange to meet with him and Mr. Smith to discuss what work needs doing.

Quite a few of the Allotment plots are not being cultivated. Mrs. Dinnin to arrange a meeting with Mrs. McCash and Mr. Phil Moore (Allotment and Garden Association) to identify which Allotments are not being cultivated by tenants and write to them accordingly. The letters will give the tenants three months notice that if their plot remains uncultivated the Parish Council will have no alternative but to terminate their Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

Action: C. Dinnin

b) Routine reports

i) Fire-alarm test

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

ii) Monthly village-report

Mr. Filer completed the report on the 12th and 13th July 2009.

Only the adverse items highlighted in the monthly village-report are minuted.

- **Sportsfield**

The penalty area is very worn and does not appear to have been re-seeded.

Mr. Smith said that the football club did re-seed this area, however, they did not fence the area off to protect it.

- **Car park**

The disabled car park sign is broken and needs replacing.

Action: J. Meischke

- **External toilets**

A bolt is missing on one of the external toilet doors. Mr. Meischke to investigate.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Culverts**

There is a gap in the fence near the Mill Lane culvert by the bridge that looks big enough for a child to squeeze through.

Mr. Smith to inspect and contact Mr. Meischke if there is a problem.

Action: M. Smith

- **Salt Bins**

The salt bin at the top of Great Innings has a lid missing and quite a number of the salt bins are either empty or partially full. The salt bins will need to be filled and repaired before the winter season.

This item to be placed on the September agenda to ensure that this action is followed up.

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- **Allotments**

The monthly village-report now includes a map of the Allotments so that plots that are not being cultivated can be identified as well as any other problem areas.

Mr. Filer said that he had great difficulty identifying the individual Allotment plots because they did not seem to correspond to the map. He suggested that the Allotment plots need numbering. It was agreed to investigate the cost of numbered stakes for some or all of the Allotments. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Church walk**

The grass verge on both sides of Church walk is growing over the tarmac pathway. Mrs. Dinnin to ask Adam Welch to quote for removing the grass.

Action: C. Dinnin

- **Church hedge**

The church hedge that runs adjacent to the horse's field is overgrowing the footpath. Mr. Knight to arrange for the hedge to be cut.

Action: I. Knight

- **School hedge**

The school hedge is overgrowing the footpath that exits on Church Lane.

The Clerk to write to the Head teacher of Watton Primary school, Eileen King, asking her to arrange to have the hedge cut back as soon as possible.

Action: J. Allsop

iii) Weekly sportsfield-report and action

- **Play area**

Mr. Meischke said that Ted Brown has weed killed around the play area.

9 Correspondence received

a) Rosemary Cooper re overhanging trees, hedges etc

Rosemary Cooper wrote on 24th June concerning a problem of an overgrown hedge and trees in the High Street. Mr. Meischke contacted the owner of the hedge and trees, who arranged for them to be cut back.

b) East Herts Council – Perrywood Farm, Perrywood Lane

Mr. Meischke read out the following (undated) letter from the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

‘Location: Perrywood Farm, Perrywood Lane, Watton-at-Stone, Herts SG14 2RH

Further to our previous communications I have now completed my investigations and write to inform you that the use of the farm for the parking of HGV (Enterprise) vehicles has now ceased. The owners have responded to our enforcement action and the property is no longer being used as a contractor’s yard.’

c) BSWW Parish News re annual grant

Mr. Meischke read out a letter (dated 7th July) from Rodney Ranzetta thanking the Parish Council for their £100 donation towards the costs of running the Parish News.

d) Churches serving Watton re Community Service on 5th July

Mr. Meischke read out the following letter (dated 7th July) from Rodney Ranzetta.

‘Community Service Sunday 5th July 2009

I am writing on behalf of the Churches Serving Watton to thank the Parish Council for letting us use the Community Hall and sportsfield last Sunday for the Community Service. As Councillor Stan Bull said, it was good to see the village coming together to join in the service. We had a good attendance and were able to collect £156 towards bibles for leavers from Watton School.’

e) Letter from Stop Bennington Wind Farm Committee

Mr. Meischke read out the following letter (dated 9th September) from Sarah Denison (on behalf of Stop Bennington Wind Farm Committee).

‘Funds to Fight the Benington Wind Turbines Appeal

Last Wednesday Benington Parish Council agreed unanimously to donate £4,000 to our fund to help engage legal and expert witness assistance at the above Appeal. We have managed to raise about £20,000 but need to double this amount to ensure adequate representation by well respected professionals.

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council opposed the building for the Wind Turbines for the following reasons:

Visual impact upon an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Turbines would be out of proportion with the natural landscape.

The Landscape Character Assessment refers to ‘the remoteness, tranquillity and continuity and sense that nothing has changed over centuries’ in this area.

No reasons for departing from Green Belt policy have been put forward.

Potential unresolved risks to health and noise issues.

Proposal is contrary to policy SD3.

Significant damage to the village through building operations.

As your resolution to oppose the wind turbines was unanimous we are asking the Parish Council to make a donation in support of this. We will then be able to continue with our fight knowing that we can employ the best professionals available.

Please could you discuss this matter at the next council meeting. The Public Enquiry is due to start on Tuesday 8th December and we need to have our funds in place well before that date.

We hope you feel able to support us.’

Mrs. McCash raised her strong objections to any discussions taking place regarding the above letter, because this item is not on the July agenda. The Clerk reminded Parish Councillors that they could not authorise a decision regarding a donation at this meeting, however they could debate the contents of the letter.

Parish Councillors discussed the ethics of using Parish Council funds to support the Benington Wind Farm application. It was agreed by all that this item be placed on the agenda for discussion at the September Parish Council meeting.

Agenda: 09/09

The Clerk to contact the Society of Local Council Clerks to find out what the Parish Council’s legal position is regarding donations.

Action: J. Allsop

Following advice from Mr. Harris, it was agreed that it was not appropriate to ask East Herts Council’s solicitor for their advice on this issue because it is East Herts Council’s planning decision that is being appealed.

Mr. Meischke to speak to the Chairman of Benington Parish Council regarding their donation to Stop Benington Wind Farm Committee.

Action: J. Meischke

f) E-mail from Philip Howell re use of Main Hall

The following e-mail was received on 14th July from Philip Howell.

'If I may, I would like have an item raised at the meeting tomorrow where the community hall is discussed.

I was wondering how the committee would feel about the Sports Hall being hired for the use of radio controlled model electric cars and or helicopters by a small group of friends . The attraction of the hall is the smooth surface for the cars and the wind free space for the helicopters.

The cars are about 30cm long and weigh about 500g with a top speed of about 15 mph but the skill is in the lap time round a wiggly circuit. The helicopters are about 30cm long and weigh about 300g.

Of course we would need to check the tyres do not leave marks and if necessary, a roll of protective cushion could be placed around the edge.

I would like to know if the committee would agree to the hall being used for this purpose.

Please ring me or email if you have any questions.'

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Stock to meet with Mr. Howell to discuss the matter further.

Action: J. Meischke/D. Stock

10 Village organisations

- **Wotton Youth Drop Inn:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone School Governors:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Watch**

Mrs. McCash said that there had been a concerning number of vehicle thefts and thefts from motor vehicles in the village in the past few weeks. There have also been two thefts from dwellings in the past month.

Mrs. McCash said that PCSO Paul Weston would be taking a five-year break from the police force, which will commence in December 2009. This will be a great loss to the village as Paul gives a lot of time to the village and has been a great supporter of Neighbourhood Watch.

Mrs. McCash will try to find the name of the PCSO who will be taking over from Paul in Wotton-at-Stone.

Action: H. McCash

- **Wotton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Mr. Stock attended the meeting of the War Memorial Hall Management Committee held on 8th July 2009. He was pleased to report that the committee appeared to have every thing under control and that an extensive internal re-decorating scheme was about to be undertaken. Also, some new chairs are about to be purchased to replace some of the existing old/mixed furniture. The next meeting is scheduled for 1st September.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Scout & Guide Group:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Sports & Social Club:** Nothing to report.

- **Police Authority:** Nothing to report.

- **River Beane Restoration Association:** Nothing to report.

11 Items for Parish News

The following item was identified for inclusion in the September 2009 issue of the Parish News.

- **New website**

Mr. Stock to write to article.

Action: D. Stock

- **The meeting closed at 2108 hours.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 8th September 2009.**