

# Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the Thirty-fourth meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council (2007 – 2011 Session) held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 8.25 p.m. in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

**Present:**        **Mr A Morris**                    **Chairman**  
                       **Mr R Gregory**                    **)**  
                       **Mrs C Piccolo**                   **) Councillors**  
                       **Mr J Purvis**                        **)**  
                       **Mrs M Wilkinson**              **)**

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 21 member of the public.

## 34.1 Public session.

There were no questions or comments on agenda items.

**34.2 Absent.** Cllr Forgham [business commitments]; Cllr Williamson [on holiday].

**34.3 Declarations of interest.** None.

**34.4 Minutes of the Parish Council meeting** held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010 had been previously circulated. The minutes were agreed as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Mrs Piccolo and seconded by Cllr Purvis.

## 34.5 Matters arising from the minutes

**34.5.1 Verges damaged by builders at Chasedene, Bury Green.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that the verge had been repaired although a vehicle had driven over it since leaving unsightly ruts. The Chairman was concerned that the ditch running past the front of Chasedene had been filled in. He proposed that the Clerk should report the matter to the relevant authorities. Agreed.

**34.6 Possible gypsy and traveller site.** From the floor, Mr Don Gibson of the Little Hadham Conservation Society gave a presentation. [Appendix 1]

## 34.7 Playgrounds.

**34.7.1 Issues arising from the latest playground inspection.** The Clerk said that Mr Trevor Waldock of EHC was checking with the inspector that the repairs to the seesaw were safe and that the seesaw could continue in use. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that plastic buffers for the ends of the seesaw would cost £200 though she was unsure they would offer much extra protection. Cllr Williamson would consider the other matters raised and plan a programme of repairs. Adjustments to the aerial runway might involve the installers – SMP Playgrounds.

Action  
GW

## 34.8 Road matters.

**34.8.1 List of outstanding repairs.** Cllr Purvis said there was nothing to report.

**34.8.2 Blocked gullies outside ‘Ash Farm’, Stortford Road and outside ‘Acremans’, Acreman Street.** The Clerk said that the gully outside Ash Farm had been added to the Herts. Highways lists for regular cleaning. Herts. Highways was trying to find who owned the land next to the Acreman Street gully as it appeared the drain flowed to a silted up pond by the side of the road.

**34.8.3 Damage to the war memorial wall.** The Clerk said that he had spoken to the company running transport for LaFarge, the company listed on the side of the lorry that damaged the wall. Unfortunately the builders who witnessed the event failed to

record the number of the lorry and no driver was willing to admit to damaging the wall. The Clerk said that he would continue to chase the lorry owner but he was not optimistic that they would admit liability. Cllr Purvis said that he had obtained a quotation of £650 to make the repair. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that her husband thought that he could make the repair for just the cost of materials. Agreed if the Clerk was not able to get the lorry owners to pay.

Action  
Clerk

**34.8.4 Refurbishment of the A120 bridge over the Ash.** The Chairman said that the parapets of the bridge did not comply with modern safety standards and were being replaced. A resident had complained that the existing parapet was not being preserved or at least replaced by something of similar design. However, Herts. Highways had said that the new barrier had to have a generally smooth face so as to guide crashing vehicles back onto the road.

**34.9 Arrangements for the use and maintenance of the telephone kiosks.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that both kiosks were now in use and encouraged residents to use the facility to borrow and return the books on display.

**34.10 Parish Plan Group.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said she had no details of planned events.

**34.11 Bury Green wedding.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that the wedding reception had been very successful. The happy couple had presented a cheque for £500 to the school.

**34.12 Millennium Wood.** Damage to the path through the wood by horses. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she and the Clerk had received emails and telephone calls from local residents concerning horses that had churned up the path through the wood and left piles of droppings. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she had spoken to the man in charge of the stables who had been very apologetic and said that he would not lead the horses through the wood again. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she had revisited the wood and there had been very little extra damage following her meeting. She reminded the Council that the wood and path were on private land and the public were only allowed to use them with the good will of the owners.

**34.13 Chairman's report.**

**34.13.1 Fair trade.** The Chairman said that he was encouraging Bishop's Stortford to register as a Fair Trade town and associate Little Hadham with it. Cllr Gregory asked if there were any nearby parishes that belonged to the scheme. The Chairman said the Harlow was a member.

Action  
AM

### 34.14 Clerk's Report

#### 34.14.1 Financial statement

##### Period ending 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Barclay's Bank C/Acc	£9,095.25
StepSaver BP Acc	£5.19
BP Acc	£169.96
Petty cash	£32.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,303.29</b>

##### To be agreed

##### Included above

Little Hadham Village Hall	£50.61
Mr R A Hills - returned deposit	£500.00
BDO LLP - Audit fee	£158.63
Mower Services	£284.35
HAPTPC - councillor training	£25.00

##### To be paid

Mr B Evans	P/Clerk - (August)	£315.61	
	Exp (August)	£19.20	£334.81
Mrs K Green	Grass cutting and bins (August)		£44.40
Miss A Windmill	Litter picking (August)		£101.59
Mower Services	2 cuts August		£284.35
Little Hadham PCC	Use church copier		£20.02
	<b>Total payments</b>		<b>£785.17</b>

**Total in all accounts and petty cash after payment of this month's bills £8,518.12**

**34.14.2** Proposed to accept payment of accounts. Agreed.

**34.14.3** Proposed to accept the accuracy of the financial statement. Proposed Cllr Purvis, seconded Cllr Mrs Piccolo. Agreed.

**34.14.4** To accept the report from the external auditors and to consider any recommendations they might have made. Agreed. The Clerk said that no recommendations had been made. The report was accepted.

#### 34.15 Democratic 10 minutes.

A resident asked about the cutting of the Ridgeway playground hedge. The Clerk said that he had been in continual contact with the contractor who was having problems with his sub-contractor, a local farmer. The contractor has said that he would buy his own machine and he should be in contact with the Clerk very shortly.

**34.16 Planning matters.** The transactions of the Planning Committee were noted.

**34.17 Correspondence.** The Clerk distributed items of correspondence to relevant members.

Clerks and Councils Direct magazine	AM
HAPTC Newsletter	AM/CP
HAPTC Annual Report	AM
CPRE Countryside Voice magazine	MW
CPRE Fieldwork magazine	CP
HCC Road use and accidents leaflets	JP
HCC Waste Management leaflets	MW/CP
SSE newsletters	AM
EHC LDF Core Strategy consultation documents and CD	CP
EHC Sawbridgeworth Community Voice minutes	CP

**34.18 Date of the next meeting Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010.**

**34.19 The Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 9:05 p.m.**

## **Appendix 1. Presentation by Mr Don Gibson of the Little Hadham Conservation Society.**

### **Presentation to LHPC on Tuesday 7th September 2010**

I'm Don Gibson, chairman of LHCS, which was set-up over 2 years ago to combat Government plans to introduce G&T sites in this village. The expression G&T is an accepted and permitted abbreviation for Gypsies and Travellers.

A few months ago a new (Coalition) Government was elected and almost overnight the non-elected body known as EERA (East of England Regional Authority) was disbanded. It was this group (EERA) which had been tasked by the previous Government to, amongst other things, push through policies aimed at increasing the number of G&T sites in the East of England.

To refresh your memories EERA made sweeping recommendations not only to drastically increase allocated numbers of G&T pitches. (1187 in east of England) but to extend catchment areas so that new places, previously unvisited and certainly unpopulated by G&T's, should be made available by DCs, and, if necessary, compulsorily purchased.

The load (set by EERA) for EH was 15 new pitches & in anticipation of a quick requirement by Westminster to get the pitches up and running, EH commissioned a private company, Scott-Wilson, to find and report on suitable places in the EH area.

SW identified 7 locations - 2 in Hunsdon, 3 in Buntingford and 2 in LH - which met the criteria laid down by Government (near main trunk road, schools and surgery). The two sites in LH are at the junction of Millfield Lane and the A120.

Following-on from this an Examination in Public was held in 2008 at Spirella Corset factory, Letchworth and attended by every possible group affected by the proposed changes, both for and against. Members of LHCS attended, presented our objections to the Panel and reported back to the PC, and in items published in the Parish News. The end result of the Ex. in P was a recommendation by the Panel to Government to accept EERA's figures and proposals, but, not satisfied with this the Minister responsible increased our share from 15 to 20 pitches! And a timetable was set whereby EH would have to identify the sites where the 20 pitches were to be located and prepare them -hardstanding, electricity, water, sewage etc - ready for occupation by 2011.

So, that's where things stood on 6th May this year. Since then, and following the abolition of EERA, EH sent me an email which summarised their understanding and interpretation of the new coalition Government's intentions concerning the way in which District Councils were now to respond to the challenges of G&T's accommodation:

"Local Councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers....Local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand and for bringing forward land. GTAA's (G&T Accommodation Assessments) have been undertaken by all Local Authorities AND if Local Authorities decide to review the levels of provision these assessments will form a good starting point. However, LA's are not bound by them. We will review relevant regulations and guidance on this matter in due course."

From correspondence received recently it appears that there will be no consultation on G&T allocations until 2012 at the earliest. Any additional pitches found since 2006 are to be subtracted from the original 'to find' figures - for us 15 — and in the past couple of years 4 new pitches have been established at a place called The Stables, Bayfordbury. We are down to ELEVEN. Two of my colleagues on the LHCS feel that these 11 pitches will be merged with existing sites already set-Up in the District.

My personal feeling is that EHC have abandoned the previous timetable set by Govt. and don't want to find any more G&T sites. The problems concerning G&T's in the former EERA

area are based firmly, and unfortunately for them, in the eastern part of East Anglia where the greater number of the travelling community are presently based. People in parts of Essex, Suffolk and especially Norfolk will be devastated by the demise of EERA, whereas we may become the beneficiaries of the Coalition Govt's. decisions.

I had intended saying to you. "When was the last time any of you saw G&T's trying to set-up camp in and around LH? They might, occasionally, pass through here & stop to look for work, but my only recollections of them are about 10 years ago seeing 4 or 5 caravans parked on a roundabout on the new road near Thorley, and 8 years ago when a stolen vehicle being chased by police and driven by a traveller, crashed on the A120, ironically, near Millfield Lane. However, those of you who take the Herts & Essex Observer would have seen a recent article about G&T's setting up camp at Grange Paddocks. So there goes my nice comfortable complacent feeling for the future!!! In the August 14th edition of The Economist (reg subscrib) an article highlights DALE FARM in Essex - 50 G&T families face eviction - 40 year occupation! Buying Green Belt Land, moving-in and applying for retrospective permission to live there! An occupant, Mary-Ann McCarthy is quoted as saying, "They call us nasty thieving gypsies, but we are Christian folk..." The article continues -President Sarkozy has ordered the expulsion from France of all illegal gypsy immigrants sparking a big eviction and a riot...

Now, you will all have your own private thoughts on G&T's, but you would have noticed how careful I have been while discussing this subject -I must remind you that G&T's are a recognised minority ethnic group protected by law. (Race Relations Act)

LHCS is extremely mindful of G&T needs and historic demands, we will make strong representations on behalf of this village should there be a 'U' turn on the new policy.

You may think that we have no real worries, but, complacency could well be our undoing - we cannot afford to sit back and think we are safe.