

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the Fortieth meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council (2007 – 2011 Session) held on Tuesday 5th April 2011 at 8.45 p.m. in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

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

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 13 member of the public.

40.1 Public session.

A resident spoke of the problem of dog fouling. The Chairman said that it would be discussed later in the meeting.

40.2 Absent. Cllr Forgham [holiday].

40.3 Declarations of interest. Cllr Williamson said that he had a prejudicial interest in item 14.15.3 – HCC consultation on transport – as he worked in the HCC department responsible.

40.4 Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 1st March 2011 had been previously circulated. The minutes were agreed as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Mrs Wilkinson and seconded by Cllr Purvis.

40.5 Matters arising from the minutes.

40.5.1 Possible EHC funding from Cllr Tindale. The Clerk said that Cllr Tindale had informed him that all this year's funds had been allocated. Cllr Mrs Wilkinson asked if there was funding available for the new financial year. Action Clerk

40.6 Playgrounds.

40.6.1 Programme of work to correct matters arising from the latest playground inspection. Cllr Williamson said that he needed to study the report again and discuss the details with the Clerk. Action GW

40.6.2 Repairs to the SMP apparatus. The Clerk said that he would find if Mr Trevor Waldock had returned to work. Action Clerk

40.7 Road matters.

40.7.1 List of outstanding repairs. Cllr Purvis said there was nothing to report. Cllr Mrs Wilkinson said that the method used to repair potholes was near useless as repairs lasted almost no time. She thought it would be more cost effective to make a lasting repair. She asked the Clerk to write to Herts Highways asking how its share of the government's £500 million fund for repairing potholes would be spent – in particular what would be done in the parish. Action Clerk

40.8 Flooding matters

40.8.1 Flooding of gardens at Lloyd Taylor Close and Standon Road. The chairman said that he had had a site meeting with Mr Andrew Stephenson the responsible EHC engineer. There appeared to be two problems. On nearby farmland there was a narrow pipe where a tractor track crossed a ditch. In times of heavy rainfall the water overflowed the ditch. Mr Stephenson had written to the owners and he expected the problem to be fixed fairly soon. The second problem was that water

flowed too quickly through a ditch along the edge of an arable field. EHC had designed, and were willing to pay for the installation of, a solution that would slow the water during heavy rain. However, this would flood the field causing loss of crops and possible soil erosion. The land owner was unwilling to allow the work to be carried out. From the floor, a resident affected by the flooding said that a similar scheme had been tried further up the valley but after a short time the water found new routes around the barriers constructed to slow it. There was some discussion but no conclusion made about the next steps to take.

40.8.2 Flooding at Pigs Green. The Clerk said that he had reported the matter to EHC who passed it to Herts Highways. They in turn said that it was not a road ditch but a land drainage ditch which was the responsibility of the landowner. They would be writing to Gascoyne Cecil Estates asking them to take remedial action.

40.8.3 New fence at Ashcroft Farm possibly restricting the free flow of flood water from the A120. The Clerk said he had not yet received a reply from the Environment Agency.

40.9 Dog fouling within the parish and the possible provision of dog bins. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she had contacted EHC and a representative had met her on site. The representative had said that she would propose a bin sited on the main road near the village hall. If agreed by EHC the bin might be installed in the next 6 to 12 months although she was not optimistic. If the Council were to install a bin, it would cost between £500 and £1,000. Each emptying would cost £5 – if the bins were emptied twice a week this would cost £500 a year. Cllr Mrs Piccolo proposed that the Council wait for the EHC decision. Agreed.

40.10 Repairs to the bus shelters. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she had been asked by a resident if the parish bus shelters could be repaired. It was agreed that she would obtain a quotation.

Action
CP

40.11 Oil purchasing syndicate. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she had been approached by a resident about setting up a syndicate to buy heating oil and sell it to local people. Cllr Purvis said that there was a scheme in Westland Green. The Clerk said that he did not think the Council could buy oil for resale. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs Piccolo would put a notice in the Parish News inviting residents to set up a voluntary scheme.

Action
CP

40.12 Parish Plan Group.

40.12.1 Cllr Mrs Piccolo reminded residents of the Fun Run on Sunday 12th June 2011.

40.12.2 Little Hadham Ecology Survey. The Chairman congratulated Cllr Forgham on the magnificent achievement of publishing the ecology survey. The money from sales would be donated to the Parish Plan Group.

40.13 Telephone kiosk. Progress with the art exhibition. The Chairman said that Ms Connie Flynn was still planning to stage an exhibition of her textile art works on the day of the Fun Run.

40.14 Chairman's report.

40.14.1 Council election. The Chairman said that he did not intend to stand for re-election due to the work involved in taking over a new business. He understood that four councillors had been nominated for re-election. Three extra members would have to be co-opted.

40.14.2 Parish Assembly Thursday 21st April 2011. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that the assembly had been advertised in the Parish News and that many local organisations had agreed to set up displays. Presentations would be given by the Chairman, the police, Mr Richard Beckett of the Little Hadham Charities, Mr Don Gibson of the

Little Hadham preservation Society and Mr Mike Smith of the Parish Plan Group. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she hoped that HCC Cllr Mrs Leanda Newlyn would attend but she had not yet confirmed.

- 40.14.3** HCC consultation on the County Council Bus and Intalink strategies. Cllr Gregory agreed to read the documentation and prepare a response. Action
RG
- 40.14.4** Police matters. Cllr Mrs Wilkinson said there would be a meeting of local people with the police on Wednesday 13th April 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at the Manor of Groves Hotel. She encouraged as many people as possible to attend so that the police would use more of their resources in the parish. Action
MW

40.15 Clerk's Report

Period ending 5th April 2011

Barclay's Bank C/Acc		£11,079.77
StepSaver BP Acc		£5.19
BP Acc		£170.02
Petty cash		£25.37
	Total	£11,280.35

To be agreed for payment

Mr B Evans	P/Clerk - (March)	£315.61	
	Exp (March)	£19.20	£334.81
Mrs K Green	Grass cutting & bins (March)	£44.40	
	Mower fuel	£6.60	£51.00
Mr A Purvis	Litter picking (March)		£101.59
Gascoyne Cecil Estates - Rent Westland Green & Bury Green			£3.13
Mower Services - one cut March			£145.20
HAPTC	Annual subscription		£553.28
Little Hadham School - copying			£34.03
HM Customs & Revenue - PAYE			£236.80
	Total payments		£1,459.84

Total in all accounts and petty cash after payment of this month's bills £9,820.51

40.15.1 Financial statement

40.15.2 Proposed to accept payment of accounts. Agreed.

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

40.15.4 To agree the efficacy of the internal audit. The Clerk presented a paper describing the details of the internal audit that had been circulated to councillors [Appendix 1]. The Chairman proposed that the Council agree to the efficacy of the internal audit. Agreed.

40.15.5 Recording Council accounts. The Clerk said that he kept the Council's accounts on a computer spreadsheet. However, he had continued to hand write the accounts into the large accounts book that had been kept by previous clerks. He asked that this practice of copying the accounts be discontinued and that the accounts be preserved as computer printouts. Agreed.

40.16 Democratic 10 minutes.

A resident asked how much emptying a dog bin would cost. The Clerk said he would find out.

A resident complained about the hedge clippings for the village hall playground hedge being thrown onto the pavement. The Clerk said that they had been cleared by the contractors.

A resident asked who had said that those who let their dogs foul the pavement would be unlikely to use dog bins. She said that a child had got an infected cut from dog excrement and she thought something should be done to remove it from pavements. A resident complained about the danger of speeding traffic near the village hall. She thought a single file chicane, similar to that in Much Hadham, should be installed. A resident said that the Council should set up a youth club in the parish. She said she had found out how people could become trained. The Chairman referred to the Young Ones that was currently looking for a leader. Cllr Gregory said that he thought discussions like these were best brought up at the assembly as they were parish rather than Council matters.

40.17 Planning matters. The transactions of the Planning Committee were noted.

40.18 Correspondence. The Clerk distributed items of correspondence to relevant members.

HAPTC Newsletter

JP

NALC LCR magazine

JP

EHC LDF Bulletin

CP

CPRE Herts Newsletter

CP

HCC Future of Herts Waste booklet

CP/MW

40.19 Date of the next meeting Tuesday 3rd May 2011.

40.20 The Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 9:38 p.m.

Action
CP

Appendix 1 – Arrangements for the internal audit

Review of the Internal Audit

Introduction

The Council must ensure that the internal audit is effective.

In particular the Council must satisfy itself on the following points:

1. Scope of the internal audit

Has the scope of the internal audit been discussed with the internal auditor to ensure that the audit covers all relevant risk areas?

2. Independence

Is the internal auditor sufficiently independent, unbiased and objective?

3. Competence

Does the internal auditor have sufficient knowledge to carry out the audit?

4. Relationships

Are the relevant responsibilities of councillors, clerk/RFO and internal auditor defined?

5. Planning and reporting

Is the Council aware of when the internal audit will take place and when a report, if any, will be reported?

Details

The internal audit is carried out by Mr Mike Smith – a retired local business man.

1. Scope of the internal audit

The internal auditor is required to:

- 1) Ensure proper accounts have been properly kept through the year.
- 2) The Council's financial regulations have been met, payments supported by invoices, expenditure approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
- 3) The Council has assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.
- 4) The annual Council precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.
- 5) Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
- 6) Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

- 7) Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.
- 8) Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.
- 9) Year-end accounts were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments), agreed with cash book, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and, where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.
- 10) The council has met its responsibilities as a trustee.

2. Independence

Mr Mike Smith has never been a member of the Council and has never been employed by the Council. Mr Smith is Chair of the Parish Plan Group but this is independent of the Council and receives no funding from the Council.

3. Competence

Mr Smith has considerable experience in business. For about twenty years he was a marketing executive working for ICI. Following this he owned and managed a limited company running a trout farm. During this time Mr Smith gained a great deal of experience in financial matters.

Currently Mr Smith is Chair of the Parish Plan Group and treasurer of the Much Hadham Horticultural Society.

4. Relationships

The Clerk is the Responsible Financial Officer and must ensure that all the duties listed above are carried out.

The Clerk is responsible for informing the Council of any legal requirements the Council must fulfil.

The Council agrees the annual budget and precept. The Council agrees to the payment of all cheques. The Council ensures that the payments and income are in the expectations with the agreed budget.

The internal auditor checks that the Clerk and Council are carrying out their responsibilities effectively.

5. Planning and reporting

The Clerk presents a report to the Council at each meeting showing the latest financial position reconciled with the latest bank statements. Latest income and expenditure is compared with the agreed budget. The Council agrees the payment of the costs for the relevant period.

In November or December the Clerk prepares an estimate of the Council's financial position for the end of the financial year and an estimate of the expenditure for the following year. Using this information the Council prepares and agrees the budget and the precept for the following year.

The Council agrees the internal auditor and the scope of the internal audit. The internal audit is carried out soon after the end of the financial year.

The Council considers and agrees the updated risk assessment annually – including the financial risk assessment.

The external audit is carried out by auditors appointed by the government during May or June. The report produced by the external auditor is reviewed by the Council when it is available and any relevant action agreed.

To be agreed by the Council

The Council has reviewed the internal audit and agrees that it will effectively assess the work of the Council including its legal requirements, its financial management and its control of risks.

B M Evans

Parish Clerk