

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council (2011 – 2015 Session) held on Tuesday 5th February 2013 at 8:29 p.m. in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

Present:	Mr J Forgham	Chairman
	Mr R Gregory)
	Mr G Pearson)
	Mrs C Piccolo) Councillors
	Mrs M Wilkinson)
	Mr G Williamson)
	Ms W Woodgate)

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 11 members of the public.

18.1. Absent. None.

18.2. Declarations of interest. None.

18.3. Public session. A resident spoke of the flooding at Green Street. She said her garden had been flooded although she had previously paid to have the drains cleared. She had contacted EHC and Herts Highways in an effort to get something done.

18.4. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 4th December 2012 had been previously circulated. The minutes were agreed as accurate.

18.5. Matters arising from the minutes. None.

18.6. Budget and Precept for 2013/14

18.6.1. The Clerk outlined a document, previously circulated to councillors, concerning the government Council Tax Support Grant [Appendix 1]. Cllr Williamson said HCC and EHC had worked for 3 years not to increase the Council Tax. Cutting the precept by the amount of the grant would keep payments to the Council fixed for local people. He thought the government seemed to reward councils who ‘toed the line’ over tax matters. The Chairman said the Council could cope if there was no grant in further years. Cllr Mrs Wilkinson proposed the precept for 2013/14 be reduced to £12,800. Agreed. A new Precept claim form was signed by the Chairman, two other councillors and the Clerk.

Action
Clerk

18.7. Playgrounds.

18.7.1. Repairs to the Ridgeway playground. From the floor Mr Foskett said he was waiting for better weather before carrying out the agreed work.

18.8. Road matters.

18.8.1. Outstanding matters. The Chairman said he would meet a representative of Herts Highways on the site of potholes in Chapel lane near Valley Fields. A dangerous pothole on the A120 had been repaired rapidly but not before several cars had been damaged.

18.8.2. Vehicles from the side roads jumping the A120 lights. The Chairman said the talk by the police that preceded the Council meeting had been very helpful. He hoped a permanent solution to the problem could be found. People were clearly stopping on the amber light at present.

Action
JF

18.8.3. Blocked drain under the road at Westland Green. The Chairman said Herts Highways would deal with this together with a blocked culvert on the A120.

- 18.8.4.** Update on protection of the gas control box south of Bridge Foot Farm. Cllr Pearson said that his daughter would present a petition to HCC on 26th February 2013. There were various grants available if HCC did nothing.
- 18.8.5.** Installation of recycled plastic planters. Cllr Ms Woodgate said the planters had been ordered. The Clerk asked that details of the order be sent to him together with the consent of Herts Highways to site the planters on the verge. Action WW
- 18.8.6.** Little Hadham sign. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said Herts Highways would install a sign for about £400. The site had been agreed as on the verge near the Ash Valley Golf Course. Cllr Gregory asked why it would be sited there when the sign on the Stortford Road was a considerable distance inside the parish. Could the Stortford Road sign be moved? Cllr Gregory also asked if a more decorative sign was available. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said both these would cost much more than the money already agreed. It was agreed to pay Herts Highways to site the sign near the golf course. Action CP/Clerk
- 18.8.7.** Damage to the verge on Stortford Road. The Chairman said a resident had reported damage and Cllr Mrs Piccolo had visited him. It was not a Council matter.
- 18.9. Flooding.**
- 18.9.1.** Cllr Pearson outlined a document he had circulated to councillors. He said further problems had been reported on Millfield Lane and Ford Hill. Cllr Gregory asked if the surcharging sewage was a health hazard. Cllr Pearson said that Environmental Health did not appear to see it as a priority. The Chairman said many other villages in the district might be seen as more of a priority such as Much Hadham. Despite this being the wettest period for many years the parish had not suffered any serious flooding of houses. It was agreed that the Chairman would call a meeting of all the agencies responsible for flooding issues. The meeting would be held in the village hall at the Council's expense. Action JF
- 18.9.2.** Proposal that the Council should budget for carrying out anti-flooding works. The Chairman said gullies could be cleared of leaves by local volunteers. He proposed that £50 be budgeted for 2013/14 for hiring the village hall, etc. Agreed.
- 18.10. Bury Green**
- 18.10.1.** Renovation of Bury Green pond and fence. The Chairman said that work required better weather. Action JF
- 18.10.2.** Tidying the Millennium Wood. The Chairman said that work required better weather. Action JF
- 18.11. Westland Green.**
- 18.11.1.** Repairs to the byroad across the green. The Chairman said he had yet to hear from Mr Maddex, HCC Footpaths Officer. He noted that off-roaders had caused more damage. Action JF
- 18.11.2.** Grass cutting of the green. From the floor Mr Stephen Stigwood said he would cut the Green but it was still too wet.
- 18.12. NHS report.** There was nothing to report.
- 18.13. Stop Stansted expansion.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that it was clear that most councillors did not think it was appropriate to make a donation to SSE. She would put a notice in the Parish News inviting residents to make a personal donation if they wished. Action CP

- 18.14. Allotments.** The Chairman said he had not received a reply from the person he had asked to be allotments rep. He said he would collect the rent. Action JF
- 18.15. Parish Plan Group.**
- 18.15.1.** Cllr Mrs Piccolo said the group were planning a fun run.
- 18.16. Consultations**
- 18.16.1.** HCC Waste disposal – various documents.
- 18.16.2.** HCC Active Travel Strategy. The Chairman proposed no response to the two documents. Agreed.
- 18.17. Chairman’s report.**
- 18.17.1. Local business directory.** Progress on creating a leaflet detailing local businesses. The Chairman said he had no further news. Action JF
- 18.17.2.** Bulb planting round village signs. The Chairman said opportunity had passed in the bad weather.
- 18.17.3.** Possible use of Bishop’s Stortford Minibus Trust Community Transport. The Chairman said he had no response to his application for local people to use the service. Action JF
- 18.18. Clerk’s Report**
- 18.18.1. Financial statement**
- Period ending 5th February 2013**
- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Barclay's Bank C/Acc | | £10,954.83 | |
| StepSaver BP Acc | | £5.19 | |
| BP Acc | | £170.16 | |
| Petty cash | | £8.02 | |
| | Total | | £11,138.20 |
| Uncleared cheques | | | |
| Mr A Purvis - litter picker | | £108.66 | |
| Isobel Hospice - in memory Mr Michael Hurford | | £10.00 | |
| Kyokujitsu Kyokushin Karate Club - Donation | | £150.00 | |
| | Total uncleared | | £268.66 |
| To be agreed for payment | | | |
| Mr B Evans | P/Clerk - January | £315.61 | |
| | Exp (Dec & Jan) | £13.70 | £329.31 |
| Karin Green Garden Services | -Grass cutting (January) | | £50.00 |
| Mr A Purvis | Litter picking (January) | | £108.66 |
| Little Hadham Village Hall | Meetings Oct to Dec | | £54.36 |
| Little Hadham PCC | Contribution to Parish News | | £200.00 |
| | Total payments | | £742.33 |
- Total in all accounts and petty cash after payment of this month's bills £10,127.21**
- 18.18.2.** Proposed to accept payment of accounts. Agreed.
- 18.18.3.** Proposed to accept the accuracy of the financial statement. Agreed.
- 18.19. Democratic 10 minutes.**
- A resident noted that building the bypass would solve most of the flooding problems.
- A resident asked when Bury Green would be cut. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said she had spoken to Mr Roat of Romehold and he had agreed to continue to cut the grass

when required.

A resident said that new houses in Bishop's Stortford would increase traffic on the A120. It was already difficult to pull out of the Cradle End Road. Cllr Mrs Piccolo agreed and encouraged residents to write to EHC to make their feeling known.

Cllr Mrs Piccolo spoke of the Hadhams website. She invited people to suggest items for inclusion.

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

18.21. Correspondence.

CPRE Fieldwork Newsletter

CP

Clerks Councils Direct magazine

JF

Groundwork Annual Review

CP

LCR magazine

JF

18.22. Date of the next meeting Tuesday 5th March 2013.

18.23. The Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 9:49 p.m.

Appendix 1 Clerk's report on Precept, Tax Base and the changes for 2013/14

Precept

The Council prepares a budget estimating the expenditure and income for the coming year. This budget is used to calculate the precept – the money EHC will collect from residents for the parish council as part of the Council Tax.

Tax Base

The tax base is a number calculated by EHC based on the number of homes in the parish in the various bands. If the precept is divided by the tax base, the answer is the sum paid by a Band D home. The sums paid by other bands are calculated from the Band D tax.

The tax base changes slightly from year to year. If new homes are built in the parish, the tax base will increase.

The larger the tax base, the less each resident has to pay towards the precept.

Tax rebates

Some residents qualify for a part or whole rebate of the council tax. In the past the tax base has been calculated with the homes qualifying for rebates included. EHC has calculated the value of all the rebates and claimed this money back from the government.

From 2013/14 the government has made district councils responsible for council tax rebates. EHC will calculate the tax base using only the homes that do not qualify for a rebate. This will result in a lower tax base than before. This will mean that residents will pay more tax to the parish council for any given precept.

Council Tax Support Scheme

Instead of EHC claiming back council tax rebates, the government has given district councils a grant to cover the cost. EHC has calculated the cost of rebates for each parish or town and will give each parish or town council a share of the government grant.

This share of the grant will be in addition to the precept collected with the council tax.

What the Council must decide

Parish councils will have decided on the precept, the money they need to collect from residents for the coming year, without taking the grant into account. Councils must decide whether to reduce their precept by the amount of the grant or accept the grant as a useful increase of income.

If the precept is lowered, residents will see little change in the council tax they pay to the parish council and the council will still receive the same income – precept + grant.

If the precept is not lowered, residents will face a significant rise in the council tax paid to the parish council and the council will receive more money than expected.

Some considerations

The council tax paid to the parish council by each resident is relatively small. However, all residents are feeling the effects of the recession and the parish council should do everything it can to help.

There will be political pressure from the government, EHC, newspapers and others for all councils to keep tax as low as possible.

The Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14 specifically says that the grant should be shared with parish councils. This is not clear for the future – EHC is considering how to distribute the grant in future years.

It is likely that the government will reduce the size of the grant in future.

If the grant paid to the parish council is reduced, the council might find itself making the unpopular decision to increase the precept again.

Some numbers for Little Hadham

2012/13

Precept £13,500 Tax Base 537.69 Grant £0.00 Band D council tax £25.11
[Band H £50.22]

2013/14

Option 1

Precept £13,500 Tax Base 512.08 Grant £708.57 Band D council tax £26.36
[Band H £52.72] Council receives £14,208.57

Tax change 5%

Option 2

Precept £12,791.43 Tax Base 512.08 Grant £708.57 Band D council tax £24.98
[Band H £49.96] Council receives £13,500

Tax change -0.005%

Appendix 2 Little Hadham Parish Council Flood Report – Meeting 5th Feb 2013.

Little Hadham is experiencing flood problems from three separate sources. These are:

River Ash,

Surface Water runoff from fields.

Sewerage surcharging onto highways and properties.

The flood and sewer Little Hadham document circulated by email on 6th Jan 2013 contains photos of some of the issues.

The River Ash has been on Flood Alert three times in the last 9mths. The last occasion was on 27th Jan 2013, when the River was at its highest level seen for the last four years. The last actual flood was in October 2001 when 26 properties, including the Village Hall and Listed Buildings suffered significant damage amounting to over £500,000. The previous solutions offered by the River Ash Inception Report along with the construction of the by-pass are not available until such time as the bypass is ever constructed.

Little Hadham also experiences persistent and frequent surface water flooding from run off from the fields causing blockages of the highway, bow waves from passing traffic threatening to flood road side properties, and surcharging of effluent from the sewer onto the highway and into the River Ash.

Current reported problems are:

Ash crossroads, A120.

Surface water flooding, cars causing bow waves to properties. Drains blocked on

A120, water backing up onto properties as it cannot drain away.

Progress:

Highways have been asked to repair the drains several times by the Parish Council.

Environment Agency have used a JCB to dig out and remove the silt by the A120 road bridge to enable the Albury Tributary to drain and reduce surface water flooding.

Green St:

Surface water flooding from a drain cut into a field discharging directly onto the highway. Water completely covering the road, blocking drains, and entering the land of roadside properties:

Progress:

Highways are jetting the drains. EHDC Land Drainage Officer has attended and is conducting an investigation into the land owner responsible for creating the drain and possible solutions. Apparently the drain was cut to divert water approaching a residential property.

The Ford - from Village Hall past Ridgeway to Ford End.

Highway frequently flooding from surface water runoff from fields. Flooding extends from Village Hall, past Ridgeway to Ford End, about 100yds, reducing access and exit to the village. Sometimes the whole of the highway is covered, sometimes half. Cars are forced to negotiate the bend at the shallowest point, which means going through a blind bend against oncoming traffic. There have been some near misses. Cars and lorries creating bow waves encroaching onto residential property.

Progress:

Highways did put in additional drainage pipes many years ago but this has not resolved the problem. EHDC Land Drainage, Highways and Environment Agency requested to review the problem. Frequent requests for the drains to be cleared of silt, not very often carried out by Highways.

Sewers Surcharging

The sewer pipes have been filling with surface water run off and have been blocked three times since Dec 20th 2012, and many times before that. The last occasion was 27th Jan 2013 when the snow melt from the fields entered the sewer and they surcharged. Each time the sewer was full from Albury Road, right through The Ford to the Memorial. The sewer is discharging effluent onto the highway and properties on a regular basis. Over 200 homes along this stretch of the network are affected, unable to use their facilities properly, or if they use them the effluent just pumps out onto the highway further down the village.

Progress:

Numerous complaints have been made to Thames Water. They have attended Little Hadham to inspect the network, the last occasion being 27th Jan 2013. Thames confirmed the network is surcharged through the whole village and unable to drain until the weather improves, and that they expect the problem to continue with each rainfall. Thames say there is no solution possible. This has been referred to Oliver Heald MP and the Environment Agency as it is a health issue.

Progress by Little Hadham Parish Council:**Highways:**

Hertfordshire Highways are continually updated on blocked drains and requests made to have them jetted, and repaired. Much of this is subject of the LHPC Highways report from the Chair each month. However, Highways do not come out, for example, when leaves cluster round a drain causing water to back up. In some areas of the village residents clear this themselves.

Environment Agency Liaison Work:

LHPC have an active working relationship with the Environment Agency, with one of the Councillors acting as the Flood Liaison. The EA have dealt with many blockages in the River Ash reported by residents and LHPC, which include removal of dumped rubbish, fallen trees, and debris from bonfires that have washed downstream. The EA have also made several suggestions on how the river flow can be improved and how the flood risk from the River Ash can be reduced, which include an earth bund, and removal to concrete steps.

Earth Bund:

EA suggest that an earth bund from the Parish Park, through Village Hall car park and residential properties would help reduce likelihood of flooding to the village hall and residential properties, and are willing to part fund and will assist with the design and planning. Village Hall Committee are meeting to also discuss having the earth bund on their land.

Removal of Concrete from River Ash:

EA suggest that subject to permission from the landowner they could remove the concrete platform from the River bed opposite the Nags Head PH where the river flooded in 2001, and the concrete steps at the rear of the Parish Park. This would be at their expense as this would improve diversity as the river flow would improve resulting in less silt deposits helping to reduce flood risk, and enable river life to migrate upstream. EA ask the Parish Council to consider if they would like the EA progress enquiries into this.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment:

Advice has been received from Andrew Stevenson, Land Drainage Officer at EHDC who advises that a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment would assist Little Hadham. This would involve requesting Oliver Heald QC MP and Andrew Stevenson Land Drainage Officer to instigate a meeting between the Agencies that can work together to develop a solution that will improve the situation. This would involve a meeting primarily with:

- Land Drainage Officer
- Environment Agency
- Thames Water
- Hertfordshire Highways.
- Riparian owners.

Funding:

Hire of meeting room at Little Hadham Village Hall.

Creation of an earth bund – see proposals item 4.

Proposals:

1. Parish Council to request a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to be commenced.
2. To authorise funds for the hire of the meeting room for flood meetings. This would be for about three 2hr meetings during the year.
3. To request the Environment Agency to investigate the removal of the concrete from the River bed.
4. To explore the concept of an earth bund by obtaining more detailed information of costs, design, plans, and public views that can be presented to the LHPC and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment meeting for further discussion on implementation issues and sources of funding.