

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the 118th meeting of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 18th April 2013 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

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

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and **59** members of the public.

1. Police Report

Detective Inspector Chris Hunt, who covers East Herts, introduced Sergeant Duncan Wallace and PCSO Karen Broad. Insp. Hunt has been a local Police Constable, Sergeant and now Inspector in the area for about twenty one years.

He reported that it has been a very busy year since the last Assembly with the Olympic Torch passing through Bishops Stortford, football and the Jubilee Celebrations which have taken police officers away from their usual duties. They have however been able to maintain their front line response.

There were two critical incidents in the area requiring the investment of a lot of police time. One involved the theft of a sundial by the sculptor Henry Moore from Perry Green. After an appeal on the television programme “Crime Watch” a scrap metal dealer had contacted Insp. Hunt to say that the sundial was sitting on his cabinet and could he come and pick it up. The dealer had paid the scrap value of £60.00 for it. It is valued at around half a million pounds. The police have done a lot of work at the Henry Moore foundation introducing new security measures.

The second incident involved Gwyn Morris an elderly care home resident who went missing. Insp. Hunt said that he had not invested so much of his staff’s time before in looking for a missing person. The response from the public wishing to help in the search had been phenomenal and he had had to turn people away. The outcome was unfortunately not a happy one when the body of Mr Morris was found in the River Lee some weeks later.

The police have also been dealing with a number of problems associated with the Little Hadham traffic lights and the A120 road. Local people have been very concerned about drivers jumping the red lights particularly when the children are going to school. Eight officers have been stationed at the lights to monitor the situation on several occasions. Since Christmas 2012 over a hundred people who have gone through a red light have been stopped – the majority contravening the law have been local people. One such incident involved a bus driver on the 351 bus route. When he was pulled up it also transpired that he was overloaded and five schoolchildren had to be taken off the bus before the driver could get out. The driver has since been suspended and is due to appear in court. H.C.C. will now be reviewing the contract with the bus company and may well revoke its licence. Evidence of these incidents can now be given to the Herts Highways Dept. but little will be done until there is a fatal accident which Inspector Hunt feels is not acceptable. He wants some solution to the problem because he cannot afford to invest so many officers in this operation on a regular basis.

The police have also been in discussion with parents about traffic issues outside the primary school. Vehicles have been speeding down the A 120 and overtaking on double white lines. This makes it very dangerous for cars coming in and out of the school entrance.

Insp. Hunt also spoke about Operation Panther which deals with low level anti-social behaviour. The offender gets three chances. On the first occasion a letter is sent home

outlining the misbehaviour; on the second occasion a PCSO makes a home visit and on the third the parents/carers are called into the police station to discuss the matter. Usually the first letter is enough to stop the problem and there have been 1074 fewer incidents in the area since the scheme was introduced – the best in the county.

Operation Stomp has also been introduced into the area. This is intended to give tailor-made support to vulnerable people particularly those who live alone who may need help with jobs such as gardening or protection from rogue traders or opportunist thieves. Insp. Hunt listed a number of things that could be left in view of passers-by which might deter a criminal. For example a large pair of boots or children's shoes, a fluorescent jacket, a car which is often moved and flags supporting football teams could all be used to give the impression that the occupants are not elderly or living alone.

Sergeant Duncan Wallace who is the East Herts neighbourhood sergeant spoke about the very large area that he covers. Rural crime is difficult to solve once it has occurred because of the lack of witnesses and that CCTV is usually not available. However in Little Hadham only twenty one crimes had taken place up to the year ending March 2013; this was a reduction from forty two.

A member of the audience brought up the problem of very large lorries parking opposite the entrance to Mcveigh Parker Fencing on the southern boundary of the parish, and also the occurrence of very large lorries driving through the narrow lanes. If the numbers are taken and passed onto the police action can be taken.

PCSO Karen Broad announced that flood light and cameras were available for £97.00 suitable for barn security and there were also free shed alarms.

2. Cllr Jonathan Forgham

The Chairman of the Parish council thanked the police for their excellent job.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Geoff Williamson, Richard Beckett (Little Hadham Charities Trustee) and Catherine Petch (Karate Club).

The Chairman summarised council and village activities through the year.

Young people from the village Karate Club won five medals (4 being gold) in the All England Championships.

The Parish Council donated money for equipment for youth cricket coaching. Two of the participants Jack and Joel are now ready to play for the village team after this training.

Neighbourhood Watch – Councillor Carmela Piccolo is responsible for co-ordinating the emails alerting parishioners of any local criminal activity.

The traffic light problem was highlighted on Thee Counties Radio and covered by the Herts and Essex Observer.

Planning matters – Councillor Piccolo gathers comments on plans which are available for consultation by everyone on line. There are no objections to 75% of plans. Community pressure caused plans for housing in Chapel Lane to be refused.

Bishop's Stortford North – there is a lot of concern about this development. A committee of about six or seven people will meet on May 7th, 2013 to discuss what the Parish Council needs to consider. Points for discussion: increased traffic on the A120; lack of extra provision of secondary education; light and noise pollution; erosion of the rural environment.

Street Furniture –new bench by village pump erected by Dennis Taylor in memory of Barbara; replacement of the Bury Green bench, installed by Mick Foskett; new road signs for Bury Green, Westland Green (already in place) and Little Hadham to be placed by the golf club entrance at a cost of £400 each.

Planters – Wendy Woodgate and Jonathan Forgham to install these between the village hall and A120 traffic lights.

Trim-trail – installed in the recreation ground at a cost of £4000 and now in full running order.

Footpaths – Nicholas Maddex HCC is responsible for their upkeep i.e. mowing and maintenance of stiles and gates and any problems with blocked footpaths. Off road

drivers are legally entitled to use Westland Green but cause problems by ploughing up the ground. This could be alleviated by making the foundations of the byroad more solid. Pot holes and blocked drains – Chapel Lane has ditches cleared by Stephen Stigwood which has helped to stop flooding, but ditches have proved hazardous to traffic. Reflectors might help.

Armco Barriers have been erected by the gas station after petitioning by Hannah Pearson who crashed into the gas installation was badly injured and knocked out the gas supply to parts of the village.

Flooding matters are overseen by Graham Pearson.

Local Trust Fund – monies left in a trust fund are distributed annually to local residents. £40 was given out to 25 parishioners this year two down from last year. The trustees are Richard Beckett, Colin Brookbanks and Eileen Booth.

Correspondence with Oliver Heald M.P. concerning Little Hadham by-pass – a letter from the council to the M.P. has been passed to the government who in turn have referred it to the Herts County Council. H.C.C. cannot do anything about the by-pass because there is no money forthcoming from the government. The Chairman said that the bypass must not be allowed to disappear from the County's plans.

Parish Council Donations: £150 was given to the Karate Club for equipment.

Other donations: History Society; Social Club; Cricket Club; Royal British Legion Remembrance Day Wreath; individual donations.

Nature Matters – the Chairman reported that he had seen his 100th bird type in the parish (a widgeon) and had noted 275 species of moth in fourteen months.

The pond at Bury Green had been cleared but the Millennium Wood needed some work as it is now thirteen years old, but the weather had not been suitable.

The chairman hoped to hold some Parish Nature Study Days during the coming months.

The Chairman gave special thanks to the following:

Nicholas Fulcher and Hilary Davies for supplying the plants around the War Memorial.

Karin and Frank Green for keeping the village tidy.

Adam Purvis the paid village litter picker.

Des Williams a jogger with a plastic bag and litter picker who voluntarily gathers litter on his jogs through the parish.

The Club Organisers of the Social, Gardening, Bowls, Badminton, whist Drive and History clubs.

Bev Evans the Parish Clerk and the Parish Councillors.

The naming of the C15 was raised and it was felt that two signs one for The Ash section and one for The Ford section would be helpful especially in an emergency such as the cutting of the gas supply when trying to locate named houses.

3. The Headteacher of Little Hadham Primary School.

Mrs Liz Stockley assisted by her School Captains Matthew and Tabitha gave a résumé of the highlights of the school year 2012 to 2013.

April – a whole week was spent looking at structures as part of the design and technology course. The younger children visited the Gibberd Garden in Harlow and the older pupils went to the Henry Moore Foundation.

May – Year 6 sang at the Royal Albert Hall.

June – Years 3 and 4 went to Mersea for an Outdoor Week.

July – A local Olympic Torch Bearer visited the school and Mrs Stockley and the pupils were photographed with the torch.

September – A school trip to the Olympic Stadium to watch the Paralympics.

October – School Harvest Festival at St Cecilia's Church; money was raised for a soldiers' charity.

November – The School Captains laid a wreath at the Village War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

December – KS1 staged a nativity play "Born in a Barn" and designed their back drop.

January - Pupils sang at the O₂ Arena.

February – On the 6th at 2.45pm pupils participated in a “sign and sing” session along with many others countrywide in an attempt to get into the Guinness Book of Record. £100 was raised for the Sign Help charity.

March – Pupils participated in a “Vikings Day” with various activities such as candle-making, preparing herbs for medicines, carving soap stone runes, making wool bracelets, archaeology and dressing up.

4. The Environment Agency represented by Mr Colin Street.

Mr Street said he had hoped to report on plans for dealing with flooding issues in the parish but financial cuts meant that many of the projects would not now be carried out. A £350,000 cut to the budget will mean that removal of river material near “The Nag’s Head” will not take place. Two cuts of the river vegetation per year will be retained but further savings will have to be found. Mr Street felt he could not make any comments about what work may be carried out but he would let the council know when he had more information.

There were a number of questions raised from the floor about flood management. It was explained that the clearing of rubbish and debris from the river bed helps to prevent flooding. Dredging is now considered unhelpful in flood control as it slows down the flow of water which increases deposition of mud which makes things worse. River courses which have been deepened and widened are now being made narrower and shallower to alleviate flooding. There are 150 stretches of river looked after by Mr Street but only those in the high risk category will be dealt with on a regular basis although emergencies will be covered on all rivers. Walking the river courses will continue as this helps to keep an eye on the state of the rivers. Parishioners were urged not to put garden refuse into the rivers.

5. The Parish Plan – Mr Mike Smith.

Mr Smith said he was disappointed that some of the year’s plans did not materialise. The Fun Run was cancelled so that it did not clash with the Olympics. There are no plans to hold a Run this year because there are not enough organisers. However, if anyone is willing to step forward a Run and Fun Day can raise two to three thousand pounds and there is plenty of advice and equipment available.

There was a small Jubilee Celebration on the Field with races and free teas. £674 was raised and there was a grant from the council of £300.

There has been some interest shown in the commemoration of 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War which took place on August 4th, 1914. Through the archive of local resident Fred Harris’s notes there is information about those who went to war, those who returned and those who were gassed and injured. Maggie Smith has written a review to be presented in the Village Hall in the August of 2014 and people are invited to come forward to take part.

A presentation of information about those who appear on the Village War Memorial was set up at the Parish Assembly by Mr Mike Smith.

6. Pantomime Group – Councillor Robin Gregory.

Robin Gregory, a past dame spoke entertainingly about the Pantomime Group which has been running for forty one years. He said that from September to January every year on a Thursday or Tuesday night in the Village Hall, men become women and vice versa. This culminates in people dressing up and making up on eight separate occasions in front of over a thousand people in January. Not he hastened to add, a trans-gender festival but the annual production of the pantomime group – Jack and the Beanstalk this year. Cllr Gregory went on to point out that the chorus line ranges from teens to octogenarians and those treading the boards come from a variety of walks of life including local doctors, past and present, a former headteacher, farmer’s wife and a postmistress. Progress in rehearsals is reported in the Much and Little Hadham Parish Magazines by a thinly disguised member

of the cast. The pantomime has been nominated for best panto and best technical production. However new blood is always required and volunteers in whatever capacity will always be welcomed.

- 7. The Team Vicar for the Ash and Quin Valley** – The Reverend Giles Tulk
The Chairman welcomed the new vicar who will be responsible for the parishes of Much Hadham, Little Hadham, Albury, Furneux Pelham Stocking Pelham and Braughing. Rev Tulk introduced himself by saying he was a local person having been born in Bishop's Stortford Hospital and growing up in Sheering. He recounted the fact that he too had been subjected to trouble at the traffic lights when returning from a camping holiday as a child, a lorry took the side off the Mini Traveller he and his family were travelling in! The Rector had been installed as the team vicar the previous Monday, April 15th in St Andrew's Church, Much Hadham by the Bishop of St Albans. Rev Tulk said that he believed the church was there for the community. He wanted to involve himself in the local school and village life as well. He did a lot of walking and hoped to meet people when he was out with his lurcher. He thanked Mr Don Gibson for keeping things going during the inter regnum at St Cecilia's.
- 8. To close the meeting.** The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the Parish Assembly. **He closed the meeting at 9.20 p.m.**

Appendix Clerk's Report

The Parish Precept for 2012/13 was £13,500 – unchanged from 2009/10. The precept for the current year has been reduced to £12,800 following Government changes in the way Council Tax rebates are dealt with. The reduction in the precept will mean that the money paid to the parish by each council taxpayer will be about the same as in 2012/13. This year the government has paid a grant to the Council to cover the loss of income from the lower precept. It is unclear whether the grant will be available in future years.

A detailed breakdown of the accounts is shown over the page and the Council's books will be available for inspection later this year.

At the close of business on 5th April 2012, the end of our financial year, the Parish Council had £9,637.01 in its Bank Accounts and petty cash. This surplus will allow the Council to make a number of outstanding repairs and improvements around the parish.

Our litter picker is Mr Adam Purvis – I'm sure you will want to greet Adam when you see him at work around the parish. East Herts Council funds our litter picker – £1,303.96 pa. Despite Adam's hard work, it is not possible for him to clear every part of the parish on a regular basis. I would like to see parishioners taking care of the areas around their homes by clearing some of the litter left by the thoughtless and uncaring.

Mrs Karin Green, Karin Green Garden Services, cuts the grass, helps maintain the flowers around the Village Pump and at the war memorial and empties the parish litter bins.

Thanks, as usual, are due to the residents of 'Marshalls', opposite the War Memorial, who voluntarily supply the flowers at the War Memorial and generally help keep them in pristine condition.

Mr Bev Evans – Parish Clerk

Financial position for the year 2012 to 2013

Credit	To date	Notes
B/F From 2011/12	£12,808.73	
Precept	£13,500.00	Unchanged from 2009/10
Rent	£343.50	Rent from Westland Green and wayleaves for power cables
Interest	£0.08	
VAT refund	£1,554.10	The Council reclaims VAT. The debit values below include VAT where applicable.
Litter picker	£1,303.96	EHC pays the litter picker's salary
New Homes Bonus	£2,302.00	EHC has shared the government's bonus for building new homes with the parish
Sales	£4.70	
Donations for Bury Green seat	£50.00	
Total credit	£31,867.07	

Debit

Pay	£6,639.25	To the Clerk, litter picker and Karen Green Garden Services
Mileage	£30.63	The Clerk tries to walk or cycle for most parish business trips
Telephone	£150.00	
New playground apparatus	£6,000.00	A new Trim Trail has been installed at the Village Hall playground
Bury Green seat and village planters	£1,200.55	BG seat largely paid for by donations from residents.
Post	£26.35	
Copying	£58.05	Mainly using the copier at the school
Office supplies	£67.91	Mainly paper and printer ink
P/News	£200.00	The Council is one of several organisations who fund the Parish News
Donations	£1,180.00	To the village school, graveyard upkeep, and several parish organisations
Subscriptions	£733.00	Mainly to HATPC for legal and other help and advice
Maintenance	£2,350.16	Mainly grass and hedge cutting for the playgrounds
Repairs	£2,330.22	Mainly refurbishing playground apparatus.
Rent	£236.46	Mainly Village Hall hire
Chairman	£100.00	For phone, post and travel expenses
Insurance	£687.60	To cover the play equipment as well as general Council risks
Audit	£165.67	The government appoints an external auditor
Misc	£74.21	Mainly refreshments for public meetings such as the Assembly
Total debit	£22,230.06	
Surplus to C/F to 2013/14	£9,637.01	