

A meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council was held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 18th April 2001 at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Mr. N. Poulton (Chariman) Mr. D. Stock (Vice-Chairman)
 Mr. C. Clark Mr. V. Dunhill
 Mrs. H. McCash Mr. I. Knight
 Public: 3 residents of Whempstead

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Filer, Mrs. Dinnin, Mrs. Davies and Mr. Meischke.

All Parish Councillors present at the meeting were given amended pages 11 and 12 of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 21st March. Mr. Poulton also gave Parish Councillors a copy of the Countryside Agency's leaflet 'New rights, new responsibilities'. The Clerk to copy both items to all Parish Councillors not present at this meeting. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Poulton said that he had applied for a grant towards the cost of producing the Housing Needs Survey, but had not heard the outcome.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

• **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 21st March 2001**

Mr. Stock proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

• **Give copy of letter to HCC re school admissions for the year 2002-2003 to Clerk**

Mr. Clark said that this item was still outstanding.

Action: C. Clark

• **Accept Care Group Limited quotation**

This action point has been completed.

Care Group has not yet carried-out the work. The Clerk to chase.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Find out expected delivery date for the two boot-scrapers**

This action point has been completed.

Mr. Poulton read out a quotation from Jeff Skidmore for the installation of the two boot-scrapers as follows.

'To install two foot scrapers as supplied by Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.

To fabricate two base plates with securing bolts to be set in concrete 4.5 feet x 1.5 feet approximately, and securely bolt down.

£90 + VAT, inclusive of materials'

Mrs. McCash proposed that Mr. Skidmore's quotation be accepted. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Poulton to instruct Mr. Skidmore to carry-out the work.

Action: N. Poulton

• **Contact the Chairman of Aston Parish Council re the 2001 Annual Parish Conference**

Mr. Poulton said that he had been in contact with Aston Parish Council. The Watton-at-Stone Parish Council will be hosting the Inter Parish Conference in 2002.

This item to be placed on the agenda for November 2001.

Agenda: 11.01

• **Write to Rodney Ranzetta re the use of the sportsfield by the Churches serving Watton**

This action point has been completed.

• **Write to Football and Cricket clubs re the use of the sportsfield by the Churches serving Watton**

This action point has been completed.

• **Amend and photocopy Housing-Needs Survey for distribution within the village**

The housing survey has been amended and most of the photocopying has been completed.

• **Deliver Housing-Needs Survey to all households in the village**

This item to be discussed under 3 c, Specific Items - Delivery of Housing-Needs Survey (on page 3 of these minutes).

• **Send a cheque to Cornhill Insurance for annual insurance premium re Community Hall**

This action point has been completed.

- **Place a copy of the fax received from David Yearley (RoSPA) on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Contact Jono Meischke re digital versions of the CMS, HELP and HCC logos**
The Clerk said that she had been unable to make contact with Jono Meischke re the logos. She will try again.
Action: J. Allsop
 - **Obtain two quotations for the killing of the cleavers on the Lammas**
This item to be discussed under 4 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Lammas (on pages 5 and 6 of these minutes).
 - **Complete and return the Parish Paths Partnership yearly reports and end of year return forms**
This item to be discussed under 4 a, Environment Sub-Committee - PPP (on page 6 of these minutes).
 - **Contact Ian Blomeley (Rights of Way) re the stile into the horses field (adjacent to Kimberly)**
This item to be discussed under 4 a, Environment Sub-Committee - PPP (on page 6 of these minutes).
 - **Present projects for PPP funding for next year**
This item to be discussed under 4 a, Environment Sub-Committee - PPP (on page 6 of these minutes).
 - **Ask Jeff Skidmore to spray the weeds around the play area, Community Hall and car park areas**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Write to Hertfordshire Constabulary re incidents of vandalism within the village**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Write to EHDC re planning application for Glebe Court**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Write to EHDC re planning application for 34 Lammas Road**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Show the plans for 34 Lammas Road to the residents of the neighbouring properties**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Write to David Lacon at the end of March re lifting of covenant on the Sportsfield**
This item to be discussed under 6 a, Correspondence received - Rumball Sedgwick – building on sportsfield (on pages 8 and 9 of these minutes).
 - **Place HCC Local speeding information on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Write to Mrs. P. Hammond re stretch of Church Lane known as Clappers Lane**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Place letters regarding 384 and 383 bus services on circulation**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Accept Sodexo Land Technology's quotation for the cutting of the sportsfield grass**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Complete and return EHDC forms concerning Foot and Mouth**
This action point has been completed.
 - **Chase and keep the Parish Council informed about relocation of re-cycling site from Watton School to Watton Nursery**
Mr. Poulton said that the relocation of the re-cycling site is progressing slowly. A meeting has now taken place between the re-cycling unit at EHDC and Major Shepherd of Watton Nursery. The Abel Smith Estate Trustees (who are Watton Nursery's land owners) do not have any objections to the project but would need to review the situation 12 months after installation. EHDC is now in the process of drawing up plans for approval by Major Shepherd.
Mr. Poulton to continue to keep the Parish Council up-dated on the matter. **Action: N. Poulton**
 - **Consult School Governors re possible solutions to traffic problems outside school gates**
Mr. Clark said that he had spoken to the Board of School Governors re this matter.
- c) **Action points outstanding for more than two months**
- **Chase British Telecom re reinstatement of door to the telephone box at Station Road/Glebe Close**
This action point has been completed.

However, the work has not been carried out and on the evening of Saturday 14th April the telephone box had two of the glass side-panels smashed and the door, which had been leant against the back of the box, had also been smashed. A letter has been sent to the Police informing them of this latest incident of vandalism. British Telecom has been notified (their fault number EA8 PRD16) of the incident asking them to clear the site of debris and repair the telephone box.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to British Telecom requesting them to clear the site and carry-out the repair works required without further delay.

Action: D. Stock/J. Allsop

3 Specific Items

a) Update on OFSTED report on Watton Primary School

Mr. Clark said that another parents/governors meeting had taken place. A senior officer at the Education Authority was present to talk about events following the OFSTED report. The Headteacher is currently on long-term sick leave and may be offered early retirement on health grounds.

Mr. Clark said that in general it was a very positive meeting.

Wilf Emsley (of 4 Old School Orchard) has been appointed as the new Chairman of the School Governors. The Deputy Head is currently acting Headteacher. When a satisfactory retirement package has been accepted by the Headteacher, the school can advertise for a new Headteacher. However, because of the timescales involved, and the requirement for all Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers to give one-term notice, it is unlikely that the appointment would start before the end of this calendar year.

b) Housing of the litterpick bin

Mr. Poulton reminded Parish Councillors that Camstead Homes had agreed to build a shelter for the litterpick bin.

Mr. Poulton said that he and Mr. Stock had discussed the matter recently and reviewed a need for such a structure. If the proposed Cricket Club storage shed is built, it will free up space in the external cupboard. Also, the proposed shelter in the Community Hall car park could be subjected to vandalism. Mr. Poulton has been in contact with Camstead Homes to ask them what they would be willing to make a donation of to the Parish Council if the shelter is not required. Camstead Homes have written back and offered the sum of £250. Mr. Poulton said that he had asked Mrs. Davies' husband (who is a builder) if he considered this to be a fair figure. Based on the fact that manpower and materials would already be available to Camstead Homes, he felt that it is a generous donation.

The above was discussed and it was agreed that if planning consent is granted for the Cricket Club storage shed, the Parish Council would write to Camstead Homes accepting their offer of £250. If however, planning permission is refused, the Parish Council will review the situation again.

c) Delivery of Housing-Needs Survey

Mr. Poulton said that the Sports & Social Club had recently paid Peter Allsop (the Clerk's son) £25 for distributing leaflets throughout Watton-at-Stone.

Mr. Poulton proposed that Peter Allsop be paid £25 for distributing the Housing-Needs Survey throughout Watton-at-Stone and that Mr. Clark arrange for their delivery in Whempstead. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to instruct Peter Allsop to carry-out the work.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Clark to distribute the Housing Needs Survey in Whempstead.

Action: C. Clark

d) Local Government re-organisation

This item has been on circulation. The Government has set out three possible options that local authorities can adopt. The options are:

1. **A directly elected Mayor with Cabinet**
Local people would directly elect a Mayor for the whole district and, as at present, Councillors representing local areas, known as wards. The Mayor does not have to be an existing Member of the Council. The Mayor would then choose a Cabinet from Council Members to join him or her to share the leadership of the Authority.
2. **A Cabinet with Leader**
Elections would take place exactly as they are now. Afterwards, the Council would elect a Leader. Either the Leader or the Council would then choose a Cabinet from the remaining Council Members and they would work under the political guidance of the Leader. The leader would already be a Councillor voted in by local people.
3. **A directly elected Mayor with a Council Manager**
Local people would directly elect a Mayor of the Council. Instead of having a Cabinet of Councillors there would be a Council Manager, appointed by Councillors, who would be

responsible for day-to-day decisions. The elected Mayor would give a political lead to the Council Manager.

Mr. Stock proposed that the Wotton-at-Stone Parish Council adopts option 2. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

EHDC to be informed accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

e) **Fir trees - Mill lane**

Mr. Poulton said that GBS Estates has still not cut back the fir trees overhanging Mill Lane. A copy of the EHDC letter (dated 29th December 2000) from Liz Greenwood, Landscape Officer, was sent to GBS Estates to give them permission to trim the trees.

The Clerk to write again to GBS Estates asking them to carry-out the work as soon as possible.

Action: J. Allsop

f) **Hertfordshire Police Authority – Launch of Hertfordshire’s Policing Plan 2001/02**

Mr. Poulton said that the launch, held on the 26th March, was very interesting and promises an improved strategy for dealing with crime in rural areas. However, there are still problems with regard to recruiting new officers in Hertfordshire.

g) **Grass verges – monthly inspection**

Mr. Poulton said that Sedexo (who started cutting the sportsfield grass in the year 2000) had now been awarded the contract for cutting the EHDC and HCC-owned grass verges within the village. Unfortunately, they have been unable to start work because they cannot get their machinery on-site due to the ground being too wet. It is likely that the grass-cutting schedule will be at least one month behind.

This item to remain on the agenda.

Agenda: 5/01

4 Reports

a) **Sub-Committees**

Budget & Finance

Mrs. McCash reported on the following items concerning the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Cancellation of meeting on 3rd April**

Mrs. McCash said that the meeting was cancelled for personal reasons and also because the end of year accounts were not ready for discussion.

- **Clerks contract of employment**

Mrs. McCash said that she had looked through the Clerk’s existing contract of employment and a recently-supplied model contract from the Society of Local Council Clerks. She suggested that the updates required to the contract could be made by writing to the Clerk advising her of any agreed changes.

Mrs. McCash to draft a letter for discussion and approval at the Parish Council meeting to be held on 30th May 2001.

Agenda: H. McCash

- **12-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Parish Councillors were given a copy of the 12-monthly statement of accounts for the period ending the 31st March 2001.

Mrs. McCash then went through the main income and expenditure items.

Water usage on the sportsfield to be discussed at the next meeting of the Community Hall Trustees.

Agenda: Community Hall Trustees

A statement of the accounts to be presented to the Annual Parish meeting to be held on the 30th May 2001.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Audit of the Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31st March 2001**

Pannell Kerr Forster proposes to start their audit on 29th June 2000. The Parish Council is complying with these dates.

A notice will be placed on the Parish Council notice board on the 21st May to state that the dates for public inspection of the Parish Council accounts will be from the 4th to 22nd June 2001 at the Parish Council Offices, at all reasonable times.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Audit of the Community Hall accounts for the year ending 31st March 2001**

Mr. Poulton proposed that McCash and Hay be instructed to audit the Community Hall accounts. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Comment [C1]:

Mr. Poulton reported on the following items concerning the Community Hall Trustees.

- **General repairs**

Mr. Poulton said that he and Mr. Meischke had carried-out general repair work at the Community Hall and at the MPPA on Easter Monday.

- **Date for next meeting**

Mr. Poulton asked for the date of the next meeting of the Community Hall Trustees to be changed from Tuesday 5th June to Wednesday 6th June at 7.30 pm. This was agreed.

Recreation & Amenities

In the absence of Mr. Meischke, Mr. Poulton reported on the following items concerning the Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **MPPA**

- **Repairs to fence**

Mr. Poulton said that he and Mr. Meischke had repaired the kicker boards at the MPPA on Easter Monday.

- **Grant**

Mr. Poulton said that when he was applying for grants for the re-surfacing of the MPPA he had approached SQ Environmental Trust for a grant of £6,000. However, he was advised at the end of last year that they were not yet ready to make a grant funding decision and therefore advised that we should seek alternative backers. They have now informed us that they are very interested in supporting our project, and need to know if the £6,000 contributed by the Parish Council towards the re-surfacing project was on a loan basis. Mr. Poulton said that he has informed SQ Environmental Trust that the money was on a loan basis. A decision is due in the next few days.

After discussion it was agreed that if we do receive a grant for £6,000, the Parish Council will not put the money back into reserve but put it towards new play equipment for the sportsfield play area. The Parish Council could then add the £250 donation from Camstead Homes to this amount and apply to EHDC to match this figure, bringing a total of £12,500 available for equipment.

- **Vandalism**

Mr. Poulton read out a memo from Mr. Knight to Mr. Meischke, dated 11th April, concerning three incidents of vandalism at the MPPA.

Weekend of the 24 th March	Small fire in middle of court near winder post – no permanent damage
Weekend 7 th April	Small fire near entrance gate – no damage Tennis nets – several knots in the netting were burnt Tennis net winder mechanism damaged – as normal I have replaced with a working spare – but new spare mechanism needs to be obtained.'

It was agreed that it was too late to report these incidents to the Police. However, it was agreed to invite PC Ivens to the Parish Council meeting to be held on the 27th June 2001 and inform him that the Parish Council wishes specific items to be discussed at the meeting (e.g. vandalism and speeding traffic).

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Environment

Mr. Stock reported on the following items concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Watton Green**

Mr. Stock said that work was progressing on the information board, although some delays were being experienced due to the current restrictions on access to Watton Green. However, Jono Meischke has taken a video film of the site so that he can continue with the artwork. Mr. Stock expects to receive the draft of the artwork within two weeks, which he will then discuss with Jono Meischke.

Mr. Stock to update the Parish Council on progress at the next Parish Council meeting. **Action: D. Stock**

- **Lammas**

Mr. Dunhill said that he had obtained a quotation of £90 from Ben Cannon (Cannon Contracts) for the spraying of the cleavers on the Lammas. The contractor would be able to carry-out this work before the end of the month.

Mr. Dunhill proposed that Cannon Contracts' quotation be accepted. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Dunhill to act accordingly.

Action: V. Dunhill

Mr. Dunhill to inform Ian Blomeley (Countryside Access Officer) that the work is due to take place.

Action: V. Dunhill

The footpath between Walkern Road and Mill Lane, crossing the Lammas, has been re-opened. However, it is only the Lammas footpath that is open and not the whole Lammas meadow.

• **PPP**

Mr. Dunhill said that he is in the process of completing the yearly reports and end of year return forms from the Parish Paths Partnership, which need handing in by 30th April 2001.

Action: V. Dunhill

Mr. Dunhill said that projects for PPP funding for next year will include mainly hedge cutting and strimming work. Also, a kissing-gate into the horses field adjacent to Kimberly (provided that authorisation can be obtained for its installation).

Mr. Dunhill to apply for funding from PPP accordingly.

Action: V. Dunhill

b) Sportsfield

i) Report

Mr. Meischke carried-out the sportsfield report on the 16th April, the result of which is as follows.

• **Sportsfield:**

Condition of grass	OK.
Litter	Good.
Dog-waste bin and fouling	Some fouling.
Netball posts	OK.
General	Good.

• **Children's Playground:**

Condition of surface	Good (small repair required).
Litter/Litter bin	OK.
Large swings	OK (seats).
Small swings	OK.
See-Saw	OK (adjustments!).
Slide	Ok.
Comments	RoSPA inspection due.

• **Community Hall:**

General Condition	Good.
Litter bin	OK.
Car Park	OK.
General	Excellent.

• **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**

Surface	Needs painting.
Boundary Fencing	Good (repaired).
Tennis nets	Good.
Litter	None.
General	Some weeds round edge. Clean up and weed kill!

• **Great Innings Play Area:**

Equipment	Good.
Surfaces	Some graffiti.
Litter	OK.
Dog-waste bin and fouling	None.
Comments	Grass needs cutting, some tipping rear of trees!

• **Allotments Area:**

Access	}
Condition of paths between Allotments	}
Condition of Allotments Cultivation	} All excellent
Condition of Allotments not under cultivation	}
Litter	}
Comments	}

• **Culverts on Mill Lane**

Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts Yes.

Dog-fouling Excessive, over 12 patches.

Comments Can we ask the Environment Agency to clean out?

• **Salt bins**

Perrywood Lane OK.

Great Innings OK.

Station Road OK.

Moorymead Close OK.

Hazeldell Needs new lid.

Garages between Glebe & Rectory Lane OK.

• **Dog-waste bins**

Footpath 17 OK.

Sportsfield OK.

Church Walk OK. Graffiti.

Walkern Road OK.

Station Road OK.

High Street (by Memorial) OK.

Great Innings OK.

Mill Lane OK.

General Comments: -

• **Weeds and stones around MPPA**

Mr. Skidmore to be instructed to kill the weeds and clear up the stones around the MPPA.

Action: N. Poulton

• **Culverts in Mill Lane**

It was agreed to write to the Environment Agency asking them to check the culverts to see if they need cleaning out.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Dog-waste bin in Hazeldell**

It was agreed that a new lid should not be obtained for the salt bin. The bin will be replaced when it has deteriorated further.

• **Graffiti on salt bin in Church Walk**

Mr. Poulton to try and remove graffiti.

Action: N. Poulton

5 Planning

a) Applications

i) Great Innings

4 no. 2 bedroom houses, 2 no. 1 bedroom houses, 4 no. 3 bedroom houses with access road

Amended plans

The amended plans were placed on high-speed circulation and no further comments were made by Parish Councillors.

A letter has been sent to EHDC stating that the Parish Council has no objection to the application, although they remain concerned about the safety of the large Oak tree that is protected by a TPO.

ii) Whempstead Road

Agricultural Barn

This item to be discussed with the following application.

iii) Whempstead Road

Dwelling house

Mr. Clark declared a pecuniary interest in these plans because Mr. Skidmore, the applicant, employed his son a part time-basis.

Mr. Poulton said that Mr. Clark would give his report on the applications and then leave the meeting whilst the meeting was closed to enable public discussion. The meeting would then re-open again so that Parish Councillors could discuss the application formally. Mr. Clark will be allowed to return to the meeting after the Parish Council has come to a decision.

Mr. Clark said that the plot of land is situated in the heart of Whempstead village. The proposed barn is of Dutch-style with open-sides, which would allow visibility of the farm equipment housed in it.

The dwelling house has five bedrooms all with bathrooms en-suite and is designed for the purpose of a bed and breakfast business. The apex to the roof of the building is higher than average and would possibly allow for the conversion of the loft-space into additional rooms.

The present landowner is Mr. John Wallace, a local farm owner. However, his nearest farmland is three miles from this land. The site is on an elevated position and has open views of the surrounding countryside.

The application is for an agricultural tie to be applied to the site, due to the applicant's (Mr. Jeff Skidmore) business in cutting verges and contract farming.

A number of supporting letters accompany the application, as well as a letter from Mr. Skidmore giving the reasons for his application and information to support it.

The residents of the neighbouring properties have been shown the plans. Six letters of objection have been received from residents of Whempstead. Mr. Clark said that he understood from Mr. Skidmore that the planners will recommend refusal. Mr. Skidmore would therefore be asking for the plans to be discussed by the planning committee.

Mr. Clark left the meeting at 8.20 pm and the meeting was closed to allow public discussion.

The meeting opened again at 8.30 pm.

After discussion, Mrs. McCash proposed that the Parish Council objects to the above applications for the following reasons.

1. The proposed buildings would have a detrimental visual impact on the surrounding area and are not in keeping with the existing environment.
2. The proposed buildings are inappropriate for the site.
3. The site is on a narrow bend in the highway where visibility is poor.
4. The proposed bed and breakfast business, together with vehicles/machinery garaged in the barn etc., would increase traffic movement in the area (which has experienced traffic problems in the past)
5. In light of the ADAS report, there is a question as to whether or not the applicant is involved in agriculture and therefore if an agricultural tie should be applied to the site.

Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

A letter to be sent to EHDC accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Clark returned to the meeting at 8.40 pm.

iv) Heath Mount School

Single storey extension to existing pre-prep school

Parish Councillors viewed the plans for this application.

Mr. Poulton said that the application does not directly affect any residents of Watton-at-Stone. A letter has been sent to the Planning Department stating that the Parish Council has no comment on this application.

Parish Councillors agreed with the decision.

v) 20 Great Innings North

First floor rear extension

Mr. Poulton said that Mrs. Davies had visited the residents of the neighbouring property. Because no objections were raised and the application was in keeping with similar improvements elsewhere in the village, the Clerk wrote to the Planning Department stating that the Parish Council has no comment on this application.

Parish Councillors agreed with the decision.

b) Decisions

None.

6 Correspondence received

a) Rumball Sedgwick – building on sportsfield

Mr. Poulton read the following letter (dated 29th March) from Rumball Sedgwick.

'Further to my letter of 27th February 2001 my report has now been considered by the Glebe Committee and it has been agreed that the Restrictive Covenant 2(d) contained in the Convenient dated 1st December 1961 can be modified (in as much as the Board has the ability to do so) to allow the construction of the tractor shed in the location we looked at. The lifting of this Consent is in consideration of your Council paying to my clients the sum of £100 plus all the associated cost that may arise.

I am advised however that a notice under the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976 has to be served on the Church Warden of the Parish and they have until 20th April 2001 to make any written representations against this proposed transaction. On the assumption that there are none, then the matter may proceed after 20th April.

I will ask Messrs Clayton, Solicitors, to handle the necessary paperwork to effect the lifting of this restriction and I would be grateful if you could let me know the name and address of the Council's solicitor who will be representing you.'

Mr. Poulton said that he had copied the above letter to Cled Fursland, who had previously agreed that the Cricket Club would pay the £100 and all associated costs that may arise in having the restrictive covenant lifted to enable the building of the storage shed.

It was agreed to write to Cled Fursland asking him to confirm the Cricket Club's intention in writing. Also, asking if they wish to settle all costs direct with Rumball Sedgwick, or if they would like the Parish Council to act on their behalf and be reimbursed by the Cricket Club. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

It was agreed to write to Rumball Sedgwick asking them to proceed with the lifting of the covenant and informing them that the Parish Council will not be appointing a solicitor to represent them in the matter, but will be dealing with it direct themselves. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

b) Mr. A. C. Beavan – re-opening of public footpaths

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter, dated 2nd April, from Tony Beavan (of 38 Great Innings South).

Please find below a copy of my letter to Brian Hammond.

Whilst I was reading the Mercury dated 30th March, I was delighted to see that livestock within this village has been cleared of Foot and Mouth.

On Saturday a MAFF representative stated on the radio, that there is no longer any need for open spaces not containing livestock, to remain closed in areas that have not been affected by this disease.

In Watton, between the River Beane and the By-pass to the east of the High Street, three footpaths have been closed. Two of these are between Walkern and Mill Lane and the third from Mill Lane to Ware Road.

To my knowledge, it has been at least a year since livestock grazed on the fields bordered by Walkern Road, Ware Road, the River Beane and the By-pass.

On behalf of those who enjoy walking these paths, I urge you to review the present restrictions covering the above and possibly others within this Parish and the County in general.'

It was agreed to write to Mr. Beavan informing him that at the present time the footpath between Walkern Road and Mill Lane, crossing the Lammas, is open. However, it should be noted that dogs are to be kept on leads at all times and that it is only the Lammas footpath that is open and not the whole Lammas meadow.

Also, enclosing a copy of a letter to Vernon Dunhill from the Countryside Management Service and a copy of the official notices that will be used for all re-opened footpaths in Hertfordshire. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

c) EHDC – Access to the Countryside

EHDC wrote (letter dated 27th March) stating that HCC Trading Standards Department are urgently collating a list of all playing fields/open land that are available to the public at this stage of the foot and mouth outbreak. Mr. Poulton said that the Parish Council responded to this letter on the 2nd April, stating that it owns a sportsfield in School Lane where sport is continuing to be played. Also, it owns two pieces of (open space) common land known as the Lammas and Watton Green.

d) HCC – Hedges on embankment, Church Lane

Mr. Poulton read out a letter from Ron Jack (Parish Engineer, EH Highways Partnership) dated 27th March to Railtrack PLC at York, stating that the hedges appear to be their property.

Mr. Poulton said that the hedges have now all been cut back.

e) Railtrack – broken fencing at railway bridge in Church Lane

Mr. Poulton read out a letter from Rod Heaton (Surveyor, Operational Property Services at Railtrack) dated 22nd March. Mr. Heaton notes the Parish Council's concerns about the fencing and has reported the matter to the Route Contact Manger at London North East Railtrack Zone at York.

Mr. Stock said that he had noted that orange/white plastic barriers were now lying by the railtrack.

It was agreed to write to the Route Contact Manger at London North East Railtrack Zone at York asking him to repair the fence as a matter of urgency. **Action: J. Allsop**

f) EHDC – Standards Committees and Sub-Committees

All Parish Councillors were given a copy of the EHDC letter (dated 2nd April) prior to this meeting.

After discussion it was agreed to respond to EHDC stating that the Parish Council will be placing this item on the agenda for the Inter Parish Conference to be held in Spring 2001. However, its response to the following questions is:

Question	Response
i) The number of Parish Councillors to be appointed	-
ii) The term of office of those Members	The term for which they were elected onto their own council
iii) How they are to be selected	By ballot

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

g) Countryside Management Service – Parish Paths Partnership: Foot and Mouth Restrictions

All Parish Councillors were copied with the Countryside Management Service’s letter (dated 6th April) enclosing an example copy of the opening notices for all footpaths that were closed due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic.

Mr. Poulton reported that unfortunately bogus opening signs had been put up in Hertfordshire just before the Easter holidays. The re-opening programme of specified footpaths in Hertfordshire had to be halted whilst all of the bogus signs were destroyed.

h) Dr. Norden –Condition of road surface and verges from Watton-at-Stone to Datchworth

Mr. Poulton said that Dr. Norden had copied the Parish Council with correspondence relating to his complaints about the condition of the Watton Road.

Mr. Poulton said that EH Highways Partnership will be installing a new drain on the left-hand side of the carriageway from Watton-at-Stone to Datchworth (approximately half a mile out of Watton-at-Stone on the bend in the road). This stretch of road has been subject to flooding. The road surface will also be patched at this time.

It was agreed to write to Dr. Norden informing him of the improvements planned for the Watton-at-Stone to Datchworth stretch of the Watton Road. However, the Parish Council is unable to assist on the stretch of road from Datchworth to Woolmer Green, because it is Datchworth Parish Council’s area. **Action: J. Allsop**

7 Reports from other Organisations

• **Watton-at-Stone conservation Society**

Mr. Stock said that he would be attending the next meeting of the Conservation Society on 19th April.

• **Watton-at-Stone JMI School**

Refer to item 3 a, Specific Items – Update on OFSTED report on Watton Primary School (on page 3 of these minutes).

• **Church Walk barrier**

Mr. Dunhill said that the gate to replace the barrier at the end of Church Walk had now been installed, although it still needs painting (green) and does not close properly. Mr. Poulton said that since Mr. Salmon retired as Caretaker of the Community Hall the gate to the field had been kept unlocked without any problems occurring. He therefore suggested that the gate at the end of Church Walk be left unlocked for the present and if problems arise in the future it can be locked. This was agreed.

• **Watton-at-Stone Scout and Guide Group**

Mr. Poulton said that he had attended the recent Scout and Guide Group AGM. However, they were unaware that Mr. Dunhill was their Parish Council representative. Mr. Dunhill said that he had lost contact with the Scout and Guide Group when the leaders of the group changed during last year.

It was agreed that following the election of Parish Council representatives to local organisations at the Annual Meeting to be held on 30th May 2001, the Scout and Guide Group be notified of their Parish Council representative.

8 Accounts/Correspondence

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Receipts

Sale of 8 Parish Maps	<u>12.00</u>
	<u>12.00</u>

Payments

Mercury paper	<u>6.03</u>
	<u>6.03</u>

Cheques required

Boardmans Photocopying	Charges to 31.03.01	15.70
HCC	2 Boot scrapers	427.70
Inland Revenue	Tax and NI	115.14
J. Allsop	Telephone March 2001	23.54
J. Allsop	April salary	473.20
		<u>1055.28</u>

Cheques received

EHDC	Leaf picking	<u>200.00</u>
		<u>200.00</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Floodlighting to 21/03/01	60.00
Mr. Miles – Pavilion hire	<u>35.00</u>
	<u>85.00</u>

Payments

VAT return 02/01	<u>3.45</u>
	<u>3.45</u>

Cheques required

Cornhill Insurance	Annual premium	692.01
Stevenage Glass	Replace broken window glass	115.39
Three Valleys Water	Supply of water	47.49
Robert Adams	Decoration works	708.00
D. Clarke	Decoration works	215.00
David Bunyan	Repair guttering and roof	129.84
David Bunyan	Additional repairs to roof	141.00
EHDC	Rates – April 2001	85.35
Business Gas	Supply of gas	508.79
HCC	Cleaning materials	52.92
Mrs. C. Bewley	32 hours work	168.00
		<u>2863.79</u>

Cheques received

Mrs. Gilbey	Hire of Main Hall	65.00
Mrs. Lambsden	Pavilion hire	48.00
Badminton Club	Hire of Main Hall	135.00
Watton House Ltd	Pavilion hire	14.00
Georgina Pay	Hire of Main Hall	30.00
Georgina Pay	Hire of Main Hall	<u>33.00</u>
		<u>325.00</u>

Mrs. McCash proposed that the accounts be paid, Mr. Clark seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

9 Chairman's / Clerk's Report

- **Transfer of Licence at the Waggon and Horses Public House**

Emjay Agency Limited have written to advise the Parish Council that it is intended to make an application for the transfer of licence at the Waggon and Horses Public House to Myrtle Jeanette Thacker and Sylvia Brown-Morris on 3rd July 2001 at the Court House in Stevenage. Myrtle Jeanette Thacker currently holds the licence.

- **Parish Magazine**

Mr. Poulton said that the new editor of the Parish Magazine, Roy Watson, was very keen to write about topics discussed at Parish Council meetings. Parish Councillors agreed that the contents of the magazine had greatly improved since he took over as editor and was very interesting to read. Mr. Watson to be given a copy of the Parish Council minutes at the same time that they are issued to Parish Councillors.

- **Bus permits**

Mr. Poulton said that he and the Clerk had worked non-stop for two hours issuing 77 bus permits for the elderly and disabled on Saturday 7th April. This was a large increase on previous years, probably due to the fact that the permits are issued free of charge.

- **The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 30th May 2001.**