

Minutes of the meeting of the Wotton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 9th April 2003 at 7.15 pm

Present:	Mr. N. Poulton (Chairman)	Mr. D. Stock (Vice-Chairman)
	Mr. C. Clark	Mrs. S. Davies
	Mrs. C. Dinnin	Mr. V. Dunhill
	Mr. D. Filer	Mr. I. Knight
	Mrs. H. McCash	Mr. J. Meischke
Public:	Mr. E. Riddle	

1 Apologies for absence

None.

2 Declaration of Interests

Mrs. McCash declared an interest in item 6 Reports - Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

Mrs. McCash will therefore leave the meeting when the item is discussed.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Poulton said that the following urgent items had been received after the agenda was published.

- i) Planning Application for Dairy Cottage, Home Farm, Woodhall Park, change of use of dwelling to B1 use as an estate office – This item to be discussed under 7 a iv), Planning Applications (on page 11 of these minutes).
- ii) Planning Application for Watton Nursery, Polythene tunnel. This item to be discussed under 7 a v), Planning Applications (on page 11 of these minutes).
- iii) Oliver Heald – ‘Home to School Transport Policy’. This item to be discussed under 8 e, Correspondence received (on pages 13, 14 and 15 of these minutes).

Mr. Poulton handed out copies of a letter from Peter Knight (deputy District Commissioner, Hertford District Scouts) who is organising a night hike in Watton-at-Stone on Saturday 4th to Sunday 5th October 2003. This item to be placed on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting to be held on 14th May 2003. **Agenda: 05/03**

4 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th March 2003**

Mrs. McCash proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Mr. Filer seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Contact Danny Kyan re Mill Lane junction onto the A602**

Mr. Clark said that in spite of leaving numerous messages, he had been unsuccessful in getting hold of either Valerie Weaver or Danny Kyan (Hertfordshire Highways) re our request that the Mill Lane junction with the A602 be made a left-hand turn only.

Mr. Poulton said that he is to meet with Ms. Weaver on 24th April and would make sure that this item was on the agenda for discussion. **Action: N. Poulton**

All Parish Councillors agreed that this subject must be pursued. This item to remain on the agenda

- **Chase Hertford Highways re flooding of Walkern Road**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 5 d, Specific Items - Walkern Road – flooding (on pages 3 and 4 of these minutes).

- **Write to Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society re litter bin on Great Innings Estate**

This action point has been completed.

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter, dated 19th March, from Jo Greenbank (Housing Officer, Stort Valley Housing Association).

‘Thank you for your letter dated 5/3/03.

I have been to look at the bin in question; I feel there would be no real advantage in replacing the bin due to the vicinity and lack of use the bin would be getting at the moment.

I will, of course, monitor the situation. If a large amount of litter starts appearing in the area, I shall review the situation again.’

The Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society has been sent a copy of the Stort Valley Housing Association letter.

- **Attend Hertfordshire Constabulary launch of 2003/2004 policing plan and report at April Parish Council meeting**

Mr. Filer reported that he had attended the launch of the Hertfordshire Policing Plan for the year 2003/04 on Monday 21st March 2003. The launch was well attended and presentations were given by Peter Holland (Chairman of the Hertfordshire Police Authority), Paul Acres (Chief Constable), Stuart Philip (North Herts District Council) and Bill Ogley (Hertfordshire County Council).

Paul Acres gave details of the Policing Plan for Hertfordshire 2003 – 2005 and highlighted targets set for 2003/04 and for 2004/05 against which the police service could be measured. The Chief Constable also highlighted the problem of retaining police officers in Hertfordshire because the nearby Metropolitan Police Force paid about £6,000 per year more. He stated that although recruitment was good, there was a high percentage of probationer constables in the Hertfordshire force and thus a shortage of experienced police officers.

It was agreed to invite PC Ivens to the Parish Council meeting to be held on 10th September 2003.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Try to attend the PREP (Parishes for Rural Environmental Protection) meeting on 22nd April in Braughing**

Mr. Stock said that he is unable to attend this PREP meeting.

Mr. Clark said that he would attend the meeting.

Action: C. Clark

- **Write to Watton Primary School, Oliver Heald and Brian Hammond re ‘Home from School Transport policy’**

This action point has been completed.

- **Write article for Parish News about changes to ‘Home from School Transport policy’**

This action point has been completed.

- **Obtain designs from Mr. Mould for ornate village sign**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 5 a, Specific Items - Ornate village sign (on page 3 of these minutes).

- **Chase the Punch Pub Company Re ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull public house**

This item to be discussed under 5 c, Specific Items - Ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull public house (on page 3 of these minutes).

- **Clarify the requirements for an internal audit**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Reports - Budget & Finance Sub-Committee (on page 5 of these minutes).

- **Write to Lubbock Fine re audit of Community Hall accounts**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 6 a Reports, Budget & Finance Sub-Committee - Internal and external audit of Parish Council and Community Hall accounts (on page 5 of these minutes).

- **Pay Cornhill Insurance**

This action point has been completed.

- **Purchase anti-glare screen**

The Clerk said that an anti-glare screen for the Parish Council’s computer had been ordered and delivery is expected within the next few days.

- **Report on trustees meeting held on 13th February 2003**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Reports, Community Hall Trustees – Minutes and report on meeting held on 13th February 2003 (on page 5 of these minutes).

- **Distribute minutes of trustees’ meeting as soon as they are complete**

This action point has been completed.

- **If Mr. Welch is not interested in buying leaf blower and mower, advertise in Parish News**

This item to be discussed under 6 a, Reports, Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee - Parish-Council-owned strimmer, mower and leaf blower (on page 8 of these minutes).

- **Write to all allotments holders re Allotment Holders Association**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 6 a, Reports, Environment Sub-Committee - Allotments (on page 9 of these minutes).

- **Re-visit Lammas and mark the trees and parts of trees to be removed**

This action point has been completed.

Refer to item 6 a, Reports, Environment Sub-Committee - Lammas trees and tree debris (on page 9 of these minutes).

- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 9 Beane Road**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write to EHDC re planning application for 1 Hazeldell**
This action point has been completed.
- **Site new litterbin at Watton Green**
This action point has been completed.
- **Write article for Parish News**
This action point has been completed.

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Contact Fred Burnell re moles on sportsfield**
Mr. Poulton said that Mr. Burnell is attending to the mole problem on the sportsfield. So as not to upset members of the public, Mr. Burnell does his work discreetly when no one is around.

5 Specific Items

a) Traffic-claiming in Whempstead

This item was discussed under 4 b, Review of Actions - Contact Danny Kyan, at Hertfordshire Highways, re traffic calming at Whempstead (on page 1 of these minutes).

b) Ornate village sign

Mrs. McCash presented the initial sketches produced by Glyn Mould. Parish Councillors studied sketches in detail and after discussion it was agreed to write to Mr. Mould asking to make the following changes.

- Slide A - i) Add a red ball to the Cricket Crest
- ii) Remove the large duck and replace with two very small ducks.
- iii) Add, in the background, the roof and window of the Methodist Church

- Slide B - i) Date to be changed to 2000.

Mrs. McCash and Mrs. Dinnin to meet with the Watton-at-Stone Millennium Mayfayre Committee to discuss and agree the final design of the whole sign. **Action: H. McCash/C. Dinnin**

Mrs. McCash to write to Mr. Mould accordingly.

Action: H. McCash

c) Ownership of footpath adjacent to Bull Public House

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter dated 3rd April 2003 from James Bryant (Estate Manger, Punch Pub Company)

‘Re : Public footpath adjacent Bull Public House, High Street, Watton-at-Stone

I refer to your letter dated 3rd January in respect of the above matter. I have now investigated your comments and am able to respond as follows.

Firstly, the footpath marked in red hatching on your plan does not fall within the ownership of Punch Pub Company, nor that which is held Leasehold by the current Licensee Mr. M. Stockhausen.

There may be a Public Right of Way across the pub car park from the aforementioned footpath to the High Street, but the footpath itself that your refer to does not fall within Punch’s Registered Title.

Secondly, I am surprised to note you consider the footpath to be in such a bad state of repair that it requires urgent repairs before ‘someone gets injured’. Having undertaken a visual inspection of the footpath I am unable to see any repairs being required at all.

I am sorry that I have been unable to help you in this matter. Would you please not our new office address for all correspondence.’

After discussion, it was agreed to write to Mr. Ian Bromley, Rights of Way Officer at HCC, copying him with Mr. Bryant’s letter and with asking him to designate this footpath as a public right of way. **Action: J. Allsop**

d) Walkern Road – flooding

Mrs. Dinnin said that she had a site meeting with Valerie Weaver (Hertfordshire Highways) who accepted that there is a drainage problem on the section of Walkern Road in and around its junction with Beane Road. She agreed to measure the lowest point of the road and to dig new drain holes.

Ms. Weaver did not think that the idea of lowering the footpath kerb to allow water to flow off the footpath and back down into the river was acceptable because it would cause flooding to the adjoining field. She also felt that the grill at the Eastern end of the drainage system, before it goes underground, was not suitable for the job and needed attention to stop debris being carried into the underground gully. Mrs. Dinnin was told that this gully is the responsibility of EHDC.

It was agreed to write to EHDC asking them to install a more suitable grill. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Ms. Weaver informed her that Watton-at-Stone is to have its drainage systems assessed in the near future.

e) Traffic on the Walkern Road

This item was placed on the agenda in error.

f) Youth Football on sportsfield

Mr. Poulton said that he had received a request from a dozen or so youths about the possibility of having a portable goalmouth (with netting) on the sportsfield. He met with these youths (who are aged between 13 and 16, and tend to congregate around the Community Hall building) at the end of March and said that they would like to be involved in some sports activity now that the lighter evenings are here and asked if the Parish Council could purchase one goalmouth for them so that they can play football.

Mr. Poulton said that he had obtained two quotations for a portable goalmouth, with netting and ground anchors.

- Decathlon Sports Equipment: £137.05 (£116.64 plus £15 pounds postage and packing + VAT)
- Maudesport: £131.00 (£111.50 plus VAT)

Unfortunately, no money has been budgeted for this item. Therefore, Mr. Filer proposed that we apply to the Community Against Drugs fund for financial support. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour. It was agreed to choose the lower quote. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

Parish Councillors discussed the matter in detail and agreed that if we proceed with this request, the Parish Council would be responsible for the ongoing maintenance costs and insurance. Also, the Council would store the equipment when it was not in use.

g) Register of Electors and election of Parish Councillors

Mr. Poulton said that EHDC had notified us that only nine applications were received for election to the Parish Council and therefore we have an uncontested election. The Parish Council will now be required to co-opt a new member to fill the vacant position.

Whilst filling in his application form, Mr. Knight had asked the Clerk for some information from the register of electors and to be supplied with an up-to-date copy. The Clerk informed him that, because of recent changes in the law, she is not allowed to copy the register.

Mr. Poulton said that all Parish Councillors can obtain, on request, a copy of the register of electors from EHDC. However, they are prohibited from copying the register and must not make public any information contained within the document.

h) Request from Mr W. Pressland Pest Controller Officer for EHDC

Mr. Poulton has circulated an article from a newspaper about rabbits, together with information from DEFRA on the responsibility of land-owners to keep rabbits under control.

Mr. Poulton said that he had spoken to Mr. Wally Pressland (Head of Pest Control at EHDC) about our rabbit problem on the Lammas. Mr. Pressland has offered to ferret the land for the Parish Council, free of charge.

Mr. Poulton proposed that the Parish Council grant Mr. Pressland a license to ferret the Lammas. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour. **Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop**

6 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items concerning the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee.

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

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of the statement of accounts for the year ending the 31st March 2003. They were also given a draft summary of the accounts for issue at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Mr. Filer went through various items concerning the statements.

Note: Following the meeting, the Community Hall's six-monthly statement for its 14-day account was received. The statement showed that the account had earned interest of £6.33 to the 4th October 2002.

A copy of the amended accounts to be given to all Parish Councillors. **Action: J. Allsop**

It was agreed that the summary of the 12-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and the Community Hall be issued at the Annual Parish Meeting. **Action: J. Allsop**

• **CPRE – Membership renewal**

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council renew its CPRE membership. The annual subscription for 2003/04 is £25. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **EHDC – National non-domestic rate bill**

The rateable value of the Community Hall has been set at £3996.00. The amount now payable, after 80% relief (applicable under charitable status), is £799.20). The first payment of £79.20 is due on 15/04/2003, followed by nine instalments of £80.00 from the 15/05/03 to 15/01/04.

- **Internal and external audit of Parish Council and Community Hall accounts**

Mrs. McCash left the room while this item was discussed.

Mr. Filer said that he had spoken to Mr. Jim Morrissey, who is willing to do the internal audit of the Parish Council accounts. Mr. Morrissey would like details on exactly what the requirements of an internal audit are.

Mr. Poulton proposed that the Parish Council purchase a copy of the Practitioners Guide to Governance and Accountability in Local Councils, for £9.95. Mr. Filer seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Filer read out the following letter faxed to Laurence Newman of Lubbock Fine on 9th April 2003.

‘Watton-at-Stone Parish Council - Audits

I refer to your letter of 10th February 2003 advising us that it would not be within the spirit of the new requirements to use McCash and Hay to carry-out our internal audits. Thank you for this advice, which the Parish Council has accepted.

A further question has now arisen in that we carry-out the unofficial audit of the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall accounts. This account does not need auditing, but we feel that it is good practice to do so. It has been proposed that this audit should be carried-out by a technical clerk (not qualified) working for McCash and Hay and we should be grateful if you would advise us whether this is acceptable or whether this too would not be in keeping with the spirit of the new regulations.’

The Clerk spoke to Mr Newman, who said that as far as he was concerned the Community Hall accounts had nothing to do with the Parish Council accounts and therefore we can appoint who we like to do that audit.

Mr. Filer proposed that McCash and Hay be appointed as the auditors of the Community Hall accounts. Mr. Stock seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to ask McCash and Hay to audit the Community Hall accounts accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mrs. McCash returned to the meeting.

Mr. Filer informed Mrs. McCash that McCash and Hay have been appointed the auditors the Community Hall accounts.

Community Hall Trustees

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

- **Report on meeting held on 13th February 2003**

- **Protective clothing**

The Community Hall insurance policy recommends that overalls should be supplied to workers. It was agreed to contact Christine Bewley to ask her if she would like us to provide her with overalls.

Action: N. Poulton/ J. Meischke

- **Annual renewal of insurance policy**

The Trustees have received the annual renewal notice for the Community Hall insurance policy, which is £1,783.07 for the period starting 1st April 2003. The budget figure for 2003/2004 is £1250.

- **Parish News Advert**

Mr. Knight has produced a new version of the Community Hall advert in the Parish News. The new version is much easier to read and is now in use.

- **Cricket-Club Building**

Mr. Meischke said that he had spoken to Cled Fursland to find out if the Cricket Club still intends to build on the sportsfield. However, he did not get a conclusive answer. Parish Councillors noted that the new building was mentioned in a recent Sports and Social Club newsletter.

It was agreed not pursue the matter further.

- **MPPA & Community Hall equipment - six monthly check**

Mr. Poulton, Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke carried-out the six-monthly check on the 29th March 2003, the result of which is as follows.

MPPA

Area	Check	OK	Needs Attention	Comments (if any)
Hard surface	Is it free of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holes • Cracks • Litter/debris • Weeds • Moss etc. Court marking	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes		
Kicker boards	Are they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure 	Yes		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti-free • In good condition. Check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protruding nails • Protruding screws • Splinters/cracks • Missing nails/screws Are the gates free of graffiti, loose/missing nails/screws, cracks and splinters Do the gates open, close and lock	Yes Yes OK OK OK OK Yes Yes		
Tennis posts	Condition	OK		
Tennis nets	Condition	OK		
Flood lights	Are the lamps in contact with the trees Are the lamp posts in good order and free of graffiti	No No		One light is out.
Wire fence	Is the wire mesh: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured to posts 	Yes		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of cuts/breaks • In good condition Is the metal-work (e.g. posts, etc.) secure and in good condition	Yes Yes Yes		
Notice board	Is it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legible • Free of graffiti • Secure • Free of damage 	OK OK OK OK		
Boundary	Is it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of litter • In need of a cut 	Yes No		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of problem growth 	Yes		
<p>General/additional comments (if any): -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tensions on wires need adjusting and re-fixing. • Strong weed kill around MPPA (drainage channel). • Kicker board need securing. 				

Play Area on sportsfield

Check the following points on all pieces of play equipment (i.e. Large swings, small swings, seesaw, multi play/slide 2 spring sit-on).	OK	Needs Attention	Comments (if any)

1	All structures and frameworks should be checked to ensure there is not bending, warping, cracking, loosening or breaking.	OK	No	
2	Platforms should be free from trip hazards and protruding bolts.	OK	No	
3	Fixed items of equipment should be checked to ensure parts are not bent, broken, loosened, worn, or missing.	U	Yes	Small swing unit seat broken.
4	There should be no sharp points or protrusions.	U	Yes	See item 3 above.
5	Welds should not be damaged or corroded.	OK	No	
6	Access points should be checked to ensure there are no missing or broken rungs, and steps or treads are not loose.	OK	No	
7	Exposed mechanisms and moving components have no pinch or crush points.	OK	No	
8	Guards, handrails, or swing barriers are not missing, bent or broken and have no loose components.	OK	No	
9	All drain holes are clear.	OK	No	
10	All fastenings are secure.	OK	No	
11	Swing seats and seats in general are not damaged; do not have sharp corners, insecure fittings, chain wear and have no loose or missing components	U	Yes	See item 3 and 4 above.
12	Foundations are not cracked, loose in the ground or corroded at the base.	W	Yes	Surface under small swing requires attention.
13	Mechanical devices and other moving parts have no worn bearings, are not seized or have excessive or unduly noisy motion, have incorrect clearances and/or missing covers.	OK	No	
14	There is no play in bearings and they are greased/lubricated. If, after adjustment, there is still play in the bearings, they should be replaced immediately. Note – special attention should be given to “sealed for life” parts.	OK	No	
15	For all types of protective surfacing there should be no trip points, areas where water will lay, holes or litter.	U	Yes	See item 12 above.
16	The surface finish of equipment should be free from rust and other corrosion, cracks, splinters, sharp edges and broken or open joints.	OK	No	

Community Hall

Area	Check	OK	Needs Attention	Comments (if any)
2 Benches	Condition	OK		
Badminton/ short tennis posts *	Condition	OK		
Badminton posts *	Condition	OK		
Badminton net	Condition	OK		
Short-tennis net	Condition	OK		
Sports floor	Condition	OK		
Floor markings	Condition	OK		
External toilets	Condition	OK		
Internal toilets	Condition	OK		
Showers	Condition	OK		Need attention.
Kitchen	Condition	OK		

First Aid box	Contents	OK	
General additional comments (if any):		Pavilion needs to go on check list – being used.	

- **Floodlight**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke have repaired the floodlight that was not working.

- **Showers**

Mr. Meischke is in contact with Turners about the showers.

This item to be placed on the agenda under Community Hall Trustees.

Agenda: CH

- **MPPA & Community Hall equipment - six monthly check**

The pavilion to be included on the six monthly check list

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

- **Small (cradle) swing seat**

Mr. Meischke reported that a replacement support crutch had been purchased for the cradle seat (at a cost of £34.66, including VAT) which he and Mr. Poulton had fitted.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items concerning the Recreation & Amenities Sub-Committee.

- **RoSPA – Playarea safety inspection**

Wicksteed Leisure has given us a quotation of just under £15,000 to replace the safety surface under the play equipment (excluding the Rainbow multi-play and slide). Mr. Poulton, Mr. Stock and Mr. Meischke have looked at the site and the quotation and agreed that the most urgent item for re-surfacing is under the small swings and the see-saw. Mr. Meischke said that he had asked Wicksteed Leisure to quote for doing just these two areas but had not yet received a response from them.

Mr. Poulton said that if the Parish Council wants to apply to EHDC for a grant towards the resurfacing work, the application must be submitted by July.

It was agreed to write to Wicksteed Leisure informing them that if we do not have a response from them within the next week, we will hold them responsible for any accidents that occur in this area.

Action: J. Meischke

- **Parish-Council-owned mower and leaf blower**

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Welch has purchased the mower and leaf blower for £150 which was paid in cash.

Both of these items can now be removed from the insurance policy.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Sportsfield maintenance**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke received the following undated memo from Colin Straker.

‘As you are aware there has been some consideration about improving the condition of the sportsfield (football pitch and cricket out field). The surface this football season has been particularly poor.

Investigation into possible maintenance activity started in spring of 2002 but the year was too advanced for any work to be undertaken during 2002.

This year the investigation has been completed. We have received expert advice from Collier Turf Care who have for several years advised the Cricket Club about their cricket square maintenance programme. Following discussions we plan to carry out the following programme.

- Deep probing of the surface to improve drainage - technique uses an “earthquake” machine
- Seeding of surface
- Top dressing
- Application of fertilizer

We are seeking Parish Council approval for the work to be carried-out.

The work needs to be done in a very tight window at the end of the Football season but before the cricket season starts – during the last three weeks of April

We have the following estimate of costs.

• “Earthquake”	£550	
• Grass seed	£580	
• Sand -top dressing	£120	
• Fertilizer	£220	
	Total	£1470
		say £1500

It has been proposed that the costs should be split with a 1/3rd each to Football, Cricket and Parish Council.

Both the Football and Cricket Club have agreed to each contribute £500 and we would appreciate the Parish Council funding the balance £500.

We would also appreciate it if the payments to the contact and purchases of the seed and dressing could be done through the Parish Council with donations from the Sports and Social Cub so that we do not incur a VAT charge.'

Mr. Knight said that the above figures were only estimates and had already risen to above £1,600.

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council grant £550 towards the improvements to the sportsfield.

Mr. Stock seconded the motion.

Mr. Filer questioned Mr. Knight as to why firm quotations for the materials had not been sort at the onset of the project.

Environment

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

- **Byelaws for Watton Green and the Lammas**

Mr. Stock said that Mr. Meischke had taken the text for the byelaw signs to N. E. Signs to have them made up. However, the signs that have been produced are unsuitable because the lamination used is not suitable for the purpose.

Mr. Meischke has asked N. E. Signs to modify the signs accordingly.

This item to remain on the agenda under Environment Sub-Committee.

Agenda: Env.

- **Allotments**

Mr. Stock said that a meeting to discuss the formation of an allotment holders association has been arranged for Thursday 17th April at 1500 hours (in the Community Hall). Mr. Poulton will chair the meeting and Mr. Stock will also attend.

- **Lammas trees and tree debris**

Mr. Stock and Mr. Dunhill have visited the Lammas and marked the trees and parts of trees that need to be removed.

A quotation has been received from Eco Tree Care and Conservation for £2,300.

It was agreed to obtain further quotations from Herts Tree Care and Michael Stanley for the tree work (which includes the shredding of all debris on-site).

Action: D. Stock/J. Meischke

It was agreed to write to the Environment Agency to inform them that work is required on some of the Lammas trees on the bank of the River Beane, and to ask if they would be prepared to do this work free of charge or for a fee. If the latter is the case, would they be prepared to grant-aid money towards this essential work.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Allsop

- **Overgrown brambles by War Memorial**

Mr. Poulton said that he had received a request to cut back the brambles growing against the brick wall on the opposite side of the road to the War Memorial, because they are obstructing the footpath.

It was agreed to ask Mr. Brown to do the work.

Action: J. Meischke

b) Sportsfield

i) Report

Mr. Poulton carried-out the sportsfield report on the 12th April 2003, the result of which is as follows.

- **Sportsfield:**

Condition of grass	Good.
Litter	None.
Dog fouling	Empty.
Netball posts	Chained to post.
General	Good.

- **Children's Playground:**

Condition of surface	Good, apart from under small swings and see-saw.
Litter/Litterbin	Empty.
Large swings	Good.
Small swings	Good.
See-Saw	Good.
Rainbow multi-play and slide	Good.
Two spring sit-on	Good.
Teen shelter	Good.
General	Good.

- **Bike ramps area:**
 - Junior Jump Good.
 - Double Ramp Good.
 - Fun Box Good.
- **Community Hall:**
 - General Condition (Exterior) A lot of mud on windows.
 - Litterbin Empty.
 - Car Park Small hole appearing.
 - General Good.
- **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**
 - Surface Good.
 - Boundary Fencing Good.
 - Tennis nets Good.
 - Litter Good.
 - General Good.
- **Great Innings Play Area:**
 - Equipment Good –roundabout has been replaced.
 - Surfaces Good.
 - Litter None.
 - Dog fouling None.
 - Comments Good.
- **Allotments Area:**
 - Access Good.
 - Condition of paths between Allotments Good.
 - Condition of Allotments under cultivation More being cultivated.
 - Condition of Allotments not under cultivation Will need strimming.
 - Litter None.
 - Comments Good.
- **Culverts on Mill Lane**
 - Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts Some litter.
 - Dog-fouling None.
 - Comments OK.
- **Salt bins**
 - Perrywood Lane OK.
 - Entrance to Great Innings OK.
 - Great Innings South – outside number 93 OK.
 - Station Road OK.
 - Moorymead Close OK.
 - Hazeldell OK.
- **Dog-waste bins**
 - Footpath 17 OK.
 - Sportsfield OK.
 - Church Walk OK.
 - Walkern Road OK.
 - Station Road OK.
 - High Street (by Memorial) OK.
 - Great Innings OK.
 - Mill Lane OK.
- **General Comments** -

ii) **Weekly report and action**

No new problems were identified during the weekly inspections.

7 Planning

a) **Applications**

i) **Blue Bury Farm**

Agricultural dwelling

Mr. Knight said that he had visited the neighbours and no objections were received.

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

ii) 124 High Street

Single and two- storey rear extension

Mr. Dunhill said that he had visited the neighbours on both sides of this property. The residents of 122 High Street are concerned that the proposed extension is being built-up to the boundary and about the affect it may have on their property.

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application, although we are concerned that the proposed development extends to the boundary line. **Action: J. Allsop**

iii) 76 Hazeldell

Single storey rear conservatory

Mr. Stock said that he visited the neighbour affected and no objections were received.

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

iv) Dairy Cottage, Home Farm, Woodhall Park

Change of use of dwelling to B1 use as an estate office

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

v) Watton Nursery, Ware Road

Polythene tunnel

Parish Councillors studied the plans and agreed to write to EHDC informing them that the Parish Council has no comment on this application. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Decisions

i) 33 Moorymead Close

Porch at front of property
-EHDC permission granted

c) Applications withdrawn

i) High Mast, roundabout junction of, A602 & A119 Nr Watton-at-Stone High Mast

To replace the existing 14m central lighting column with a 17.1m duplicate lighting structure housing 3 no. antennae behind a GRP shroud together with an equipment cabinet on the south east edge of the roundabout at the junction of A602 and A119 nr Watton-at-Stone.

8 Correspondence received

a) Rodney Ranzetta – Community Service in July 2003

Mr. Poulton said that we had received a letter (dated 27th March) from Rodney Ranzetta, of the Churches Serving Watton, requesting the use of the Pavilion facilities and sportsfield for the Community Service to be held on Sunday 6th July 2002 at 10.30 a.m. They will require the facilities from 9.30 am to 12 noon at the latest.

Mr. Meischke proposed that the facilities be made available for the Community Service, free of charge (as in the past). Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

A letter to be sent to Rodney Ranzetta accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

The Clerk to contact the Sports and Social Club accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

b) Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society re bike area on Lammas

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter (dated 28th March) from the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society.

‘At our last meeting, it was pointed out that children/teenagers, who use the Lammas mountain bike area, were very noisy and leave a lot of litter.

We know that the Parish Council licence this area, and check each month, and we don to wish to see the licence revoked.

Perhaps mention could be made about the noise, and the Society would be willing to sponsor a litter bin for the area, if this would help to alleviate the litter problem.’

Mr. Poulton agreed to visit the site to speak to the children about the noise. **Action: N. Poulton**

It was agreed to accept the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society offer to sponsor a litter bin for the bike area on the Lammas. The Clerk to write accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

Mr. Poulton said that the Community Hall and the Lammas field were used as a base for sixteen youngsters to script and make a film about their activities in the village. The filming took place over two weekends in March and the final version was shown to the public at a special screening at Cineworld, Bishop's Stortford, on Wednesday 9th April. The filming received support from the SNAP Theatre Company, EHDC, Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Chrysalis Drug Project. Mr. Poulton, who was at the special screening, said "The youngsters were fantastic and received a standing ovation from the people present. It made me feel proud to see these youngsters involved in such a worthwhile project". It is hoped that the film will be shown in Watton shortly.

c) Adam Smith and Ben Aylott – half pipe for the village

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter he had received from Adam Smith and Ben Aylott.

'We are writing to you with our ideas about getting a half pipe in the village. You already have plans and costing of half pipes that I have previously sent you and we would like to do some fundraising in order to get one.

We think that the ramp picture on the right is perfect size but if possible, we would like it in a bright vibrant colour (Ben would like it pink).

We would be very grateful if you would be prepared to help us raise funds and hire someone professional to build us a wood half pipe.'

Mr. Poulton then read out his response.

'Many thanks for your recent letter regarding a half-pipe for skateboarding. The problem that we have is that the Parish Council does not own any suitable land where items for skateboarding could be erected, for as far as I understand you would require a fairly large tarmac or concrete area on which to construct this equipment.

You would also probably require planning permission for the erection of the half-pipe.

I note the problems with regard to the skateboarding facility in Stevenage, however, as I mentioned in my previous letter there is likely to be erected a skateboard park for all to use at Hartham Common in Hertford.

I admire your willingness to fundraise and I would be only too willing to assist if a suitable site can be found.'

d) David Stock - re Chairmanship of the Environment Sub-Committee

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter from Mr. Stock dated 2nd April 2003.

'I am writing to let you know that I shall not seek re-election as Chairman of the Environment Sub-Committee this year.

As you are aware, I have been the Chairman of this subcommittee for many years and although I have gained a great deal of satisfaction from what has been achieved, I now believe that it really is time for a change of leadership.

The work of our subcommittees forms the core of much of the Parish Council's activities and is what helps to make us such a pro-active organisation. This must be sustained so that we can resolve future problems in the most efficient manner.

There is still much to be done with regard to local environmental issues and projects, and my support/involvement can always be counted on. To this end, I will be happy to give any assistance to my successor as may be necessary.

A thought has just occurred to me: if I say anymore, it could start to sound like an election broadcast! So I shall stop right now.'

Mr. Poulton then read out his response.

'Many thanks for your letter of 2nd April and it is with regret that I accept your letter of resignation as Chairman of Environment Sub Committee.

Over the years that you have held this post, you have done much to improve the environment in which we live and work.

A good example is Watton Green, for without your drive and determination this area of Watton would not be what it is today.

One good thing is that you are staying on the Parish Council and, as you say in your letter, there is still much to be done on environmental issues and projects. I am certain your contributions on these issues will continue to benefit our village.'

e) Oliver Heald MP – 'Home to School Transport policy'

Mrs. Davies said that she had received two letters from Oliver Heald concerning the 'Home to School Transport policy'. In his letter of 20th March, Mr. Heald said that he had taken up the points raised with Ray

Shostak (the Director, Children School and Families at County Hall) and would write again when a reply had been received.

In his letter of 2nd April, Mr. Heald enclosed the following letter dated 27th March from Mr. Shostak

'Home to School Transport Policy

Thank you for your letter dated 20th March and received in my office on 24th March enclosing a letter from Sarah Davies about " Home to School Transport policy which comes into effect in September.

The County Council decided last year to introduce a new policy which would ensure that all children would be treated equitably in respect of transport. This entails the phasing out of the old community policy whereby children living in certain villages were entitled to free transport to a range of schools whilst children in other in other areas might be entitled to no free transport.

I confirm that free transport will be provided to younger siblings of children currently entitled to free transport to a particular school. Furthermore, free transport will be provided to a child's nearest school, where this is not a safe route between home and school, or the distance is three miles or further. This is in addition to transport provided for denominational reasons or due to a child's special needs.

The policy is not intended to limit parental choice for schools, but is designed to make the best use of a limited resource. Parents will be able, as Mrs. Davies points out, to pay for seats on buses where there is surplus capacity. It is anticipated that the number of buses provided will reduce over a period of time.

Some children living in Watton-at-Stone will receive free transport to Sele if it is their closest school. Free transport will not be provided, however, to other schools in Hertford or Ware from Watton-at-Stone because they are not the closest schools. For many children, Barnwell School in Stevenage is their nearest. Entitlement to free transport does not appear to have had any effect on the pattern of school applications this year, but the Council will monitor the situations.

Thank you once again for raising this matter with me.'

Mrs. Davies said that although she has not put her name forward for re-election as a Parish Councillor, she would like to continue to take this item forward. This was agreed by all Parish Councillors.

Note: Mrs Davies has subsequently sent the following letter to Mr. Heald.

'We have read the contents of the letter and would like to respond thus:

1. Mr. Shostak starts by talking of the new policy being brought in to treat all children 'equitably'. He compares village children with those from 'other areas', this I presume to mean those living in towns. I would of thought that such a comparison can not feasibly be made, as those living in towns obviously have better access to public transport and a great many will be within easy walking distance to a school. Those living in a village have a far greater distance to travel, thus making walking to school not an option, and public transport is both more expensive and less available.
2. Mr. Shostak then goes on to tell us where free transport is available, and this is where we hit another inaccuracy. Mr. Shostak say's that free transport will be provided to a child's nearest school where there is not a safe route between home and school, or the distance is three miles or further. I think that it is safe to say that Hertford is further than three miles from Watton-at-Stone, and I would hope that no one would consider it safe to let their children walk to Hertford. The County Council have now decided that Sele school is our nearest school. However, when it suits them, this can change to a Stevenage school, and they do not limit themselves to just one school in Stevenage, they seem to choose from Barnwell, Heathcote or Collenswood.

Two issues are raised here, firstly, if they can consider three schools to be nearest in Stevenage, then why do they limit themselves to just one school in Hertford?? Secondly, why is Watton-at-Stone not listed under any Stevenage school as being in their catchment area in the publication 'Moving On'? Watton-at-Stone is clearly listed under schools in Hertford and Ware and so parents tour those schools to make their choice. Again, standards to suit, I believe. There is also a danger of dividing the village in two, which would have dire consequences indeed. If county persist in these ridiculous double standards, you could end up with the north end of the village going to Stevenage schools and the southern end going to Hertford. I will leave you to imagine what that would do to the dynamics of the young people in the village, who have all grown up together.

3. Moving on, we have to disagree strongly with Mr. Shostak's next statement, this policy IS limiting parental choice. We are fighting a never ending battle as it is to gain places in the schools which parents perceive to be the best for their child, without then having to make the decision on whether or not they can, afford to send their child there. As far as the 'spare seats' situation goes, the policy is laughable, a parent recently put their child's name down for what they now call 'assisted transport' only to be told that it would still cost £158 per term! These school coaches will still travel the school routes for years to come, why can we not access them? County will have to pay the cost of public transport, so where is the saving? Or is this all about filling Sele school with a wider range of ability children to assist in raising the schools standing in the school league tables?

4. Lastly, Mr. Shostak admits that for some children Sele is the nearest school and for some it will be a Stevenage school (please refer to our previous points on this issue), he also claims that this new policy has not affected the pattern of school applications this year. Of course it hasn't. But this would be due to the fact that parents were unaware of it until the Parish Council informed them. The wording of the policy and it's implications in the publication 'Moving On' would be to blame for this oversight.

There is one more thought. We, as a Parish Council, were under the impression that it was Government, District and County policy to reduce the use of cars, especially for the 'school run'. This new Home to School Transport policy will force many parents to resort to transporting their children to school by car, a direct contradiction don't you think?

We stress once more that the implications of this policy to our village are devastating and totally unacceptable. A policy made by those out of touch with the rural communities. Once again, we feel that we are being discriminated against.

We believe that Mr. Shostak has failed to answer the concerns raised and has been unable to justify the reasons for the change in policy, are Children, Schools and Families really so out of touch with the very people they are there to help?

May we take this opportunity to thank you once again for your time, help and support in this matter. We look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.'

The 'Home from School Policy to be placed at the beginning of the agenda each month, until the matter has been resolved.

Agenda: 5.03

9 Reports from other Organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone School Governors**

Mr. Clark said that the Governors would like to present the Parish Council's 'Good Citizenship trophy' at the leaver's service to the Year 6 child who, in the opinion of the staff, has been the "best" citizen during their whole career whilst at the School.

Also, the Governing Body had recently run a half-day workshop to formulate a number of medium-term aspirations for the school. Once agreed with the staff, these would form part of the School Development Programme. For example, one of the proposed aspirations is to put more focus on developing a sense of community in each child which might, for instance, result in a reduction in youth crime in the village. The programme for each aspiration will involve parts of the parish community beyond the school and would certainly seek involvement with the Parish Council. A full list of the agreed aspirations will be circulated when available.

Mr. Poulton said that Adam Smith of Lammas Road has shown an interest in the formation of a Youth Council.

- **Watton-at-Stone Playgroup**

Mrs. Davies (who is not standing for re-election to the Parish Council) said that she would welcome a member of the Parish Council being elected as a representative for the Watton-at-Stone Playgroup.

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

Mr. Dunhill said the Scout and Guide Group held its AGM on Monday 31st March. The group is very active, but more helpers are required. Two leaders have left the Group. The Group Leader has moved to Scotland and the Scout Leader has left to run the Scout Explorer Group in the District. Roger Green has been elected as Chairman of the Watton-at-Stone Scout and Guide Group.

- **Watton-at-Stone Sports and Social Club**

Mr. Meischke said that the Sports and Social Club is to meet in the Community Hall on 10th April, at 7.30 pm, to discuss becoming a Charity.

10 Items for Parish News

Articles on the following items discussed by the Parish Council to be sent to the editor of the Parish News for inclusion in the next issue.

- Ornate village sign
- Football - funding for the purchase of a football goal and netting
- Sportsfield
- SNAP Theatre project - Film Stars Of Tomorrow

Mr. Filer said that he would be unable to write the articles for the Parish News because he was going away on holiday tomorrow.

Mrs. Dinnin agreed write the articles accordingly.

Action: C. Dinnin

11 Accounts/Correspondence

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Receipts

Adam Welch – for petrol mower and Leaf blower	<u>150.00</u>
	<u>150.00</u>

Payments

Photocopy paper	19.88
Phone charges	25.50
Glasdon – 2 litterbins	<u>93.13</u>
	<u>138.51</u>

Cheques required

Diocesan board	Glebe rent - sportsfield	90.00
Ted Brown	21 hours litterpicking	110.25
N. E. Signs	2 byelaw signs for the Lammas and Watton Green	89.30
J. Allsop	April salary	505.25
N. J. Hollingsworth	Work to sportsfield	<u>734.37</u>
		<u>1529.17</u>

Cheques received

Mr. Hawkins	Allotment rent 2002/2003	7.00
HCC	Parish Paths Partnership - grant	1000.00
Watton-at-Stone PCC	Donation towards cost of erecting notice board	25.00
Sports and Social Club	Hire of sportsfield facilities	<u>459.00</u>
		<u>1491.00</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community

Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Mr. Keen – Main Hall	100.00
Sarah Standage – Pavilion hire	16.00
J. Kingslake – Pavilion	21.00
Floodlighting to 06.04.03	<u>290.00</u>
	<u>427.00</u>

Payments

Three Valleys Water	<u>84.74</u>
	<u>84.74</u>

Cheques required

Christine Bewley	Cleaning	368.82
Cornhill Insurance	Annual premium for year 2003/2004	<u>1783.07</u>
		<u>2151.89</u>

Cheques received

Georgie Pay	Main Hall	30.00
Mrs. Gilbey	Main Hall	80.00
Conservation Society	Pavilion hire	10.50
David Boddy	Main Hall and pavilion hire	<u>351.00</u>
		<u>471.50</u>

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

- The meeting closed at 9.46 pm.
- The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 14th May 2003.