

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 14th December 2005

Present: Mr. N. Poulton (Chairman) Mr. J. Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
 Mr. C. Clark Mrs. C. Dinnin
 Mr. V. Dunhill Mr. D. Filer
 Mr. I. Knight Mrs. H. McCash
 Mr. M. Smith Mr. D. Stock

1 Apologies for absence

None.

2 Public Participation

None.

3 Declaration of Interests

Mr. Smith declared a Prejudicial Interest in item 8 a, Environment Sub-Committee - Interpretation Boards Watton Green (on page 7 of these minutes).

4 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Poulton reported on the following items.

- **Police report**
Because PC Andy Woodward was unable to attend this meeting he will report on policing matters during our Parish Council meeting to be held on 11th January 2006.
- **Allotment rents**
Allotment rents appear twice on the agenda.
Refer to item 7b, Specific items (on page 3 of these minutes) and deleted from Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.
- **Circulation**
Mr. Poulton said that the circulation of Parish Council mail is getting clogged in places. He urged Parish Councillors not to delay in passing items on so that any deadline dates for responses do not get missed.
- **Police poster**
PC Andy Woodward has supplied us with several copies of a Police Local Ward Constable poster which includes his name contact number.
Mr. Poulton gave a copy of the poster to Mr. Clark for the Whempstead notice board and to the Clerk for the Great Innings notice board.

Action: C. Clark/J. Allsop

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th November 2005**
Mr. Meischke proposed that the minutes be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour.

b) Review of actions

- **Fit replacement boot-scraper brushes**
Mr. Knight said that he had fitted the replacement brushes to the boot-scraper by the Community Hall but had not done the one by the MPPA yet.
- **E-mail all Parish Councillors with Mr. Bunyan's quotation for replacement guttering:** Completed.
- **Contact Mr. Poulton with details on acoustic panels:** Completed.
- **Report on feasibility and costing of installing acoustic panels in the sports hall and pavilion**
Mr. Poulton said that he and Mrs. McCash are pursuing this item although it is progressing slowly.
This item to be placed on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting in May 2006. **Agenda: 05/06**
- **Write to Mark Stewart re his allotment**
Refer to item 7 b, Update on Allotment rents (on page 3 of these minutes).
- **Speak to Cath Millar about her allotment**
Refer to 7 b, Update on Allotment rents (on page 3 of these minutes).
- **Write to Allotment and Garden Association re sign for allotments:** Completed.
- **Arrange for all Sports and Social Club key-holders to sign a copy of the agreement**
Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees – Management of keys to the Community Hall (on page 6 of these minutes).

- **Write to the Sports and Social Club regarding the Community Hall facilities:** Completed.
- **Dispose of the netball posts:** Completed.
- **Ask Ted Brown to clear the leaves around the MPPA as and when necessary:** Completed.
- **Inspect roof tiles on the car-park side, lower roof, to see if any are displaced**
Mr. Poulton said that he inspected the roof tiles and although a few tiles are slightly askew, there is no damage. He suggested that we do not have them fixed at the moment because the call-out-cost alone will be in the region of £50.
Mr. Meischke said that if Mr. Bunyan’s quotation to replace the Community Hall guttering is accepted (see item 8 a, Community Hall – Guttering, on page 6 of these minutes), he could be asked to refit the tiles at the same time.
- **Inspect the kicker-board post and arrange for it to be fixed**
Mr. Knight said that he had inspected the kicker-board post and will arrange to wire it the kicker-board.
Action: I. Knight
- **Inspect condition of footpath adjacent to the ornate village sign**
Mr. Poulton said that he inspected the footpath with Raj Goutam (Hertfordshire Highways). The excess water on the footpath was due to a major leak which has been repaired by Three Valleys Water.
- **Lock the gate to the Lammas**
Mr. Smith said that when he inspected the gate it was locked.
Mr. Dunhill had reported that the chain was so loose that it could be lifted over the gate post without unlocking the padlock. The Clerk said that after allowing the Granada film crew to film on the Lammas she had locked the gate correctly.
- **Write to HCC re footpath adjacent to the Bull Public House car park:** Completed.

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Arrange for photocopying machine to be serviced and obtain a spare cartridge before service contract ends**
The Clerk said that she had left messages on Boardman Photocopying Limited’s answer phone on several occasions asking them to service the photocopy machine before our contract expires at the end of December. However, they had not returned her calls and we have not been invoiced for any photocopying since the 30th June 2005.
It was agreed not to pursue this item further.
Note: Boardmans Photocopying Limited serviced our photocopy machine during the week commencing 19th December and supplied us with one spare cartridge.

6 Planning

a) Applications

None.

b) Decisions

i) 8 Lammas Road

Ground floor rear extension - East Herts Council permission refused

ii) 89 Great Innings North

Two-storey side extension - East Herts Council permission granted

iii) 31 Hazeldell

Conversion of garage to study and utility room - East Herts Council permission refused

Mr. Stock asked why this application had been refused as it was one of the best-designed conversions of this type that we had seen so far. He was also confused as to why this application has been refused when other similar ones in the immediate area had not.

Mr. Poulton read out the decision notice as follows.

‘Inadequate provision is made within the site for the parking of vehicles in accordance with the council’s adopted standards for car parking provision. The proposals would therefore be contrary to policy M8 of the East Hertfordshire Local Plan, and would moreover be likely to result in on street parking, detrimental to traffic flows and highway safety, and detrimental to the visual amenity of the immediately surrounding area.’

It was agreed that the Parish Council would support any appeal by the applicant.

iv) 14 Watton House

Two-storey extension to front, single-storey extension to rear and loft conversion
- East Herts Council permission refused

c) Planning application withdrawals

- i) **Blue Hill Farm**, High Elms Lane
Erection of new house and garage

7 Specific items**a) Lammas Road street lighting**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Filer met with Raj Goutam and Dave Jackson to look at the Lammas Road street lighting. Dave Jackson, from the Hertfordshire Highways Street Lighting Department, stated that the existing lanterns do not meet the current standards for lighting. The suggested upgrade to the lighting in Lammas Road is to change the lanterns on the two existing columns to meet current standards and install 4 new lamp-columns spaced at equal intervals.

The estimated cost given on-site by Dave Jackson was £4,200. Mr. Poulton said that this had now risen to £5,500 (excluding VAT). The cost would have to be met by the Parish Council. However, Mr. Poulton had spoken to East Herts Council who have indicated that they would consider a grant of £2,000. Raj Goutam said that Hertfordshire Highways would probably also consider a grant of £2,000, leaving the remaining £1500 to be funded by the Parish Council. The Parish Council can claim back the VAT element on the £5,500.

It was agreed that Raj Goutam be asked to obtain additional quotations for the work. **Action: N. Poulton**

Mr. Filer said that if no grants are forthcoming, the Parish Council will have to consider taking money out of reserves to have the work done. Or, alternatively not doing the work at all.

b) Update on Allotment rents

During the Parish Council meeting on 9th November, it was agreed to write to Mark Stewart informing him that (as per the terms and conditions of his agreement with the Parish Council) because payment was not received within 40 days of the invoice date his allotment will be allocated to someone else. However, because we subsequently received payment from Mr. Stewart, the letter was not sent and it was agreed that Mr. Meischke should visit him personally.

Mr. Meischke said that he had visited both Mark Stewart and Cath Millar and informed them that if they do not keep their allotments in a cultivated condition, the Parish Council will re-allocate them to someone else in September 2006.

They both expressed personal grievances experienced on the allotments, which Mr. Meischke then discussed with John Love (Chairman of the Allotment and Garden Association).

c) Litter bin – Watton Green

Mr. Poulton said that East Herts Council will replace the litter bin that went missing from Watton Green. They will also be installing a dog-waste bin at Watton Green and one in the High Street, between Rivershill and the village sign.

Mr. Stock reminded Parish Councillors that the wooden-rail barrier adjacent to the bin had also disappeared and needed to be replaced.

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Smith to inspect and take the necessary action. **Action: N. Poulton/M. Smith**

d) East Herts locality Policing panel meeting

Mr. Poulton attended the East Herts Locality Policing Panel meeting held on Tuesday 29th November. Because the date had been rescheduled, Mr. Filer was unable to attend the meeting.

The main objectives highlighted at the meeting are as follows.

- Bringing together rural villages in East Herts to discuss problems which in a lot of cases are common to the rural area and then applying resources to solve the problems.
- Locality Policing Panel to meet every three months.
- The need to work in partnership with the District Council, County Council, in particular Highways, Housing Associations, and the Parish Councils.

There is a list of four priority subjects of concern which are common to the rural areas, namely:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Traffic, mainly speeding
- Burglary
- Off-roading.

The actions taken to date are as follows:

- **Anti-social behaviour**

- Visiting all Secondary and Primary Schools.
- Looking at providing diversity activities.

- **Traffic**

- Use of mobile speed-signs by the Parish Council.
- Speed-calming measures.
- Use of Laser gun and the camera van.
- Use of warning signs, like those in Stapleford.
- Vehicles parking on pavement not an offence unless causing an unnecessary obstruction.

If you can't pass with a double buggy then that would deem to be an offence entailing a £30 fine.

In response to a question by Mr. Stock, Mr. Poulton said that he had not had any feedback from PC Andy Woodward with regard to vehicles parking on the pavement thus blocking access for wheelchair users and parents pushing prams etc. It was therefore agreed that we write to PC Andy Woodward to highlight the problem and ask him to advise anyone found to be causing a hazard that is an offence to do so.

Action: D. Stock

Note: For the sake of completeness the letter prepared by Mr. Stock is attached to these minutes.

See attached

Mr. Filer said that PC Andy Woodward has been very prompt in responding to any incidents that he personally highlighted to him.

- **Burglary**

- 160 reported to-date, which is similar to last year.
- Pagers being given to farmers and landowners to report crime.
- Distraction burglaries on the increase.
- Newsletter with ideas.
- Mobile Police Station.
- Police will attend village events.
- Crime prevention officer Colin Clare will visit homes.
- Ward Co-ordinators needed in every village (organiser Jill Dockley).
- Intelligence team based at Stevenage looks at cross border incidents.

- **Off-roading**

- Use of High-visibility patrols.
- Seizure of vehicles under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act.
- Police using off-road bikes to catch offenders Nick Kelly in charge.
- Working with rights of Way Officer, Tom Goldsmith, at County Hall.
- Police looking at ways of stopping off-roading.
- Public help in giving index number of bikes etc. being used in off-roading.

The Clerk to e-mail all Parish Councillors with a copy of the report.

Action: J. Allsop

Mr. Smith said that in the Times newspaper about two weeks ago he read the Police league-table on successful convictions and noted that Hertfordshire Police ranked second to bottom.

Hertfordshire Police are now issuing a newsletter and a copy will be put on circulation.

Action: J. Allsop

e) Great Innings play area improvement

Mr. Poulton said that he has been working with the Police and East Herts Council with regard to more diversity work on the Great Innings play area.

Plans have now been made to install an additional fixed goal-post on the Great Innings play area. The proposal is to remove the original goal post and enlarge the tarmac area. The old and new goal posts would then be installed so that the area of play is at an angle of 90⁰ to the existing one. The existing teen-shelter will be moved further up the site and a high fence installed. The cost of the project is £22,626.42. Circle Anglia (formerly known as Stort Valley Housing Association) is donating £8,000 and it is hoped that East Herts Council will be able to provide a similar amount, plus they will apply to the Communities Against Drugs Funding (which is a police fund) for the remaining money. They hope to complete the project before the end of this financial year (i.e. before 31st March 2006).

f) Request for salt bin in Beane Road

Mr. Knight said that he had received a request for a salt bin in Beane Road. This is because during periods of frost and snow exiting Beane Road onto the Walkern Road can be very dangerous.

After discussion, it was agreed to write to Raj Goutam (Hertfordshire Highways) highlighting the danger and requesting a site meeting to discuss the installation of a salt bin.

Action: I. Knight

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following item concerning the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.

- **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 23rd November 2005**

The following amendment was made to the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 23rd November 2005.

Page 1, item 3, Hire Charges - Sports & Social Club hire-charge

Recommendation: The Sports & Social Club hire-charge to be increased from £1070 to £2200, an increase of just over 6%.

Should read:

Recommendation: The Sports & Social Club hire-charge to be increased from £2070 to £2200, an increase of just over 6%.

Page 2, item 5, Quotations received from contractors - Lammas and Watton Green grass-cut.

'The optional fail-cut will cost £210' should read 'The optional flail-cut will cost £210'.

Mr. Meischke proposed that the minutes as amended be accepted and signed by Mr. Filer as a true record. Mr. Knight seconded the motion and all present at that meeting were in favour. Mr. Filer signed the minutes.

- **Budget 2006/2007**

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were given a copy of the draft budget figures for 2006/2007.

Mr. Filer said that he and the Clerk had reviewed each item and compared the figures to those already spent this year, and in previous years, by reference to the ledger. A similar process was then repeated at the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on the 23rd November (at which 7 out of 10 Parish Councillors were present) and alterations made where necessary.

Mr. Filer proposed that the following recommendations made by the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee be agreed.

- Community Hall hourly-rates remain the same as they are now.
- The Sports & Social Club hire-charge to be increased from £2070 to £2200.
- The allotment rent stays at the current rate of £13 per full allotment and £6.50 for one half of an allotment.
- Frank Cooper and Son Limited's quotation of £36, per cut, to cut the sportsfield grass only be accepted.
- Ted Brown continues to do the strimming of the grass around the perimeter of the sportsfield and the MPPA areas.
- Mr. Smith to do the grass cutting on the Lammas and Watton Green.
- Adam Welch's quotation of £175, per cut, for strimming and mowing work in the village during 2006 be accepted.
- Derek Monk's quotation of £55 per quarter for maintaining the War Memorial garden be accepted.
- Derek Monk's quotation of £350 per year for maintaining the flowerbeds in High Street be accepted.

Mrs. Dinnin seconded the motions and all present were in favour.

The Clerk to write to all contractors accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Precept 2006/2007**

Mr. Filer proposed that the Parish Council agrees a precept of £25,505 and that the precept forms be duly completed and returned to East Herts Council. Mrs. McCash seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Action: J. Allsop

The Clerk left the meeting while the following item was discussed.

- **Employees and self-employed remuneration**

The following self-employed remuneration was agreed.

- Ted Brown's pay to remain at £6.50 per hour.
- Rosemary Brown's pay to remain at £6.00 per hour.

It was agreed that the Clerk's basic salary be increased by 2.5%, this being the RPI figure for the month of October. This means an increase from the present figure of £6980 to a figure of £7155 per annum from 1 April 2006.

The Clerk returned to the meeting.

- **SLCC annual subscription**

The SLCC membership renewal is £93, which is a £2 increase on last year.

It was agreed to renew the membership, which provides the Parish Council with legal advice and useful information about changes in legislation, e.g. changes in accounting practises. Although this information is also available from the Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, the annual membership would be several hundred pounds.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

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

- **Management of keys to the Community Hall**

Mr. Knight said that at the last meeting of the Sports and Social Club the following affiliated clubs signed a copy of the key-holders agreement.

- Cricket Club
- Football Club (Saturday only)
- Ladies Football Club.

Mr. Knight to arrange for the following affiliated club to sign a copy of the agreement.

- Sunday Football Club.

Action: I. Knight

- **Byelaw sign**

The new byelaw sign is now fitted directly to the wall of the Community Hall, i.e. on the car-park side adjacent to the external shed.

Mr. Poulton said that sign looks very good and thanked Mr. Meischke for ordering and fitting it.

- **Guttering**

Mr. Meischke said that he approached three contractors for quotations to replace the guttering on the Community Hall. However he had only received a verbal quotation from David Bunyan as follows.

- Remove existing guttering and replace with,

• Cast iron	£1122	plus VAT
(includes priming and painting)		
• Aluminum	£1054	plus VAT
• Plastic	£490	plus VAT

Mr. Poulton said that one of the problems with the existing plastic guttering is that we are unable to source it locally. He reminded Parish Councillors that the down-pipes on the Community Hall are cast iron.

Mr. Meischke recommended that the guttering be replaced with deep flow plastic ones that can be purchased from a local supplier. He suggested that the work be done as soon as possible because the wall on the car park side of the Community Hall is damp where the guttering is leaking.

After discussion, Mrs. McCash proposed that plastic guttering be fitted. Mr. Filer seconded the motion and all present were in favour. The funds to be taking from the 2005/06 Community Hall budget contingency figure.

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Poulton to visit Chas Lowe to chose the style of plastic guttering and then instruct David Bunyan to purchase and fit it as soon as possible.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Meischke

- **Damage to Main Hall flooring**

Mr. Stock said that he and Mr. Dunhill had noticed that there is significant damage to the floor in the Main Hall. The damage appears to be caused by something is being dragged across the floor. The badminton posts have been inspected, but they do not have a rough surface that could have caused this problem.

Mr. Meischke agreed to visit both the Kick-Boxing and Jujitsu classes to see if they use any equipment that could have damaged the flooring.

Action: J. Meischke

Recreation & Amenities

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

- **Sportsfield Maintenance**

Mr. Knight said that he needed to inform the Sports and Social Club what the Parish Council contribution towards the maintenance of the sportsfield playing area is going to be.

Mr. Filer said that the budget figure for sportsfield maintenance for 2006/07 is £1000. This amount includes the purchase of an additional boot scraper plus replacement brushes for all the boot scrapers. The remaining funds can therefore be put towards the maintenance of the sportsfield playing area.

- **Additional Tennis Court**

Mr. Knight said that he had not heard from Jim Smith (a parent of one of the tennis players) who agreed to prepare the final plans for submission to the East Herts Council Planning Department.

Environment

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items concerning the Environment Sub-Committee.

- **Interpretation Boards for the Lammas – update**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Interpretation Boards have now been received and are very impressive.

Mr. Smith left the meeting.

Mrs. Dinnin said that Mr. Smith had given her a verbal estimate of £110 to install both signs on the Lammas.

Mrs. McCash proposed that we accept Mr. Smith’s verbal estimate. Mr. Meischke seconded the motion and all present were in favour.

Mr. Smith returned to the meeting.

- **Walkern Road – Visibility speeding**

Mr. Knight said that there is a visibility problem on the Walkern Road as you approach the River Beane bridge to enter the village. He suggested that the problem might be improved if the hedge belonging to the Waggon and Horses public house is cut back.

After discussion, it was agreed to write to Raj Goutam (Hertfordshire Highways) highlighting the danger and requesting a site meeting to discuss ways of resolving the problem. **Action: I. Knight**

- **War Memorial - Additional pebbles needed around the base**

Mr. Poulton and Mrs. Dinnin agreed to inspect the War Memorial site and purchase additional pebbles/gravel as required. **Action: N. Poulton/C. Dinnin**

b) Sportsfield

i) Report

Mr. Smith did the sportsfield report on the 9th December 2005, the result of which is as follows.

- **Sportsfield:**

Condition of grass	Muddy.
Litter	✓
Dog fouling	✓
General	Par for course.

- **Children’s Play Area:**

Condition of surface	
Litter/Litterbin	✓
Large swings	✓
Small swings	✓
See-Saw	✓
Rainbow multi-play and slide	✓
Two spring sit-on	✓
Teen shelter	✓
General	Tidy.

- **Bike ramps area:**

Junior Jump	✓
Double Ramp	✓
Fun Box	✓

- **Community Hall:**

General Condition (Exterior)	OK.
Litterbin	✓
Car Park	✓
General	Fair.

- **Multi-Purpose Play Area:**

Surface	✓
Boundary Fencing	✓
Tennis nets	✓
Litter	✓
General	Good.

- **Great Innings Play Area:**

Equipment	✓
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Surfaces	✓
Litter	✓
Dog fouling	✓
Comments	Stump 6” out of ground behind netball area.
• Allotments Area:	
Access	Conifers overhanging (tractor access).
Condition of paths between Allotments	✓
Condition of Allotments under cultivation	Good.
Condition of Allotments not under cultivation	As expected.
Litter	✓
Comments	Good.
• Culverts on Mill Lane	
Litter and rubbish in and around Culverts	✓
Dog-fouling	✓
Comments	Acceptable.
• Salt bins	
Perrywood Lane	✓
Entrance to Great Innings	✓
Great Innings South – outside number 93	✓
Station Road	OK ✓
Moorymead Close (2)	✓
Hazeldell	✓
Footpath 17	✓
• Dog-waste bins	
Footpath 17	✓
Sportsfield	✓
Church Walk	✓ No lid.
Walkern Road	✓
Station Road	OK – no lid.
High Street (by Memorial)	✓
Great Innings	✓
Mill Lane	✓
Opposite 5 School Lane	✓
• War Memorial	
General Comments	Good.
• Ornate Village Sign	
General Comments	Good (path repaired).
• Great Innings Play Area	
The Clerk to e-mail Trevor Waldock about the 6” stump in the ground behind netball area.	

Action: J. Allsop

ii) Weekly report and action

There was nothing to report from Ted Brown’s weekly inspections.

iii) Children’s play areas: safety inspection report

East Herts Council instructed Craigdene Limited to do the annual inspection of the children’s play area on the sportsfield for the Parish Council. A copy of the report, which was done on 11th October 2005, has been sent to us and the following problems identified.

- Site access: tree roots and uneven areas near the gate **Medium risk**
- Children have to cross path of flat swings to access other equipment **Medium risk**
- 2-bay, 4-flat seats: replace worn chains **Medium risk**
- 1-bay cradle swings: monitor regular for wear and a minimum of two links should be pulled through.
- Junior multi-unit: insufficient protective surface has been provided to meet the recommendation of EN1176 near the curved climber **Low risk**

The Parish Council has on file a letter from Wicksteed Leisure dated 12th May 2003 agreeing that when installing the equipment they failed to meet EN1176 with a 40 mm insufficient amount of wet pour in one area around the unit and confirming that they were prepared to rectify the situation by extending the base to the exact requirements of BS EN.

RoSPA wrote on the 22nd April 2003 to confirm that the failure was a low risk and that any remedial action undertaken, other than total replacement of surfacing is likely to present a hazard as small strips do not tend to adhere well to larger areas. They recommended acceptance of the surface as it is. The Parish Council accepted RoSPA's recommendation.

- Junior multi unit – the ground around the surface-edging strip has eroded and a trip hazard has occurred at the end of the slide run out. Recommend the ground is built up with soil and seeded or turfed. **Low/Medium Risk**
- Bike ramps – all of the ramps have bedded into the ground and the soil/grass has become raised. This has created a hazard to users and should be removed and levelled for smooth transition onto the grass surface. **Medium/High Risk**

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke to inspect all the risk items and take any action required.

Action: N. Poulton/J. Meischke

9 Correspondence received

a) Hertfordshire Police Authority questionnaire on Police Force Restructure

Hertfordshire Police Authority e-mailed us a questionnaire on the Police Force Restructure, which required completion and return by 2nd December 2005.

Mr. Filer and Mr. Poulton completed the questionnaire, which was then faxed to the Hertfordshire Police Authority.

All Parish Councillors to be e-mailed a copy of the completed questionnaire.

Action: J. Allsop

b) East Herts Council re potentially dangerous Ash tree/s in Perrywood Lane

Mr. Poulton said that in November Mr. Filer identified an Ash tree in Perrywood Lane (just past the entrance to Mr. Warren's property) leaning dangerously over the road. Raj Goutam was contacted to identify the ownership of the tree, which turned out to be on the Cottage site and therefore the Parish Council's responsibility.

Mr. Poulton also contacted the East Herts Council Arboricultural Officer to seek permission for the removal of the tree. They wrote on 16th November to confirm that the Ash tree was potentially dangerous and should be removed as soon as possible. They also identified a second dead Ivy-clad Ash tree close by on the bank adjacent to the fence with Crowberry. Although clad in bark, the trunk of this tree is totally decayed within.

Several verbal quotations were received, the lowest for £200 from Paul Borlase (a local farmer); who has now removed the tree. It took four hours for five people to fell the tree. Mr. Poulton arranged with Hertfordshire Highways to close the road while the tree was removed.

Paul Borlase has offered to remove the second Ash tree for a similar price.

It was agreed to purchase a bottle of Whiskey as a thank you to Paul Borlase for doing this work at a price quoted as a special favour to the Parish Council.

Action: N. Poulton

It was suggested that the Parish Council needs to look at improvement work on the Cottage site.

Mr. Stock reminded Parish Councillors that the Cottage site had been identified as phase III of the overall improvement of Watton Green. Phase I (Clearance and improvement work at Watton Green) and phase II (clearance of the wooded area on Watton Green) have been completed and now is the time to look at phase III.

It was agreed that the Countryside Management Service be asked to help us with improvement work on the cottage site and that this item be placed on the agenda, under Environment Sub-Committee, for the Parish Council meeting to be held on 11th January 2006.

Agenda: 01/06

c) East Herts Council summer playschemes 2006

Mr. Poulton read out a letter, dated 14th November, from Jo Rodwell (Play Officer at East Herts Council), requesting the free use of the of the Community Hall during August 2006 for the Summer Playscheme. East Herts Council will (as in the past) send us a £100 returnable deposit to secure the booking and to cover any possible damages to the premises.

After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed that East Herts Council can have the free use of the Community Hall facilities for the 2006 Summer Playscheme and that the booking will be confirmed on receipt of the £100 returnable deposit.

The Clerk to act accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

d) Stop Stansted expansion: request for financial support

Mr. Poulton said that the Campaign Director of Stop Stansted Expansion has written asking for financial support from the Parish Council.

Mr. Poulton felt that our greatest concern should be about the increased noise and air pollution resulting from the proposed expansion of Luton Airport, whereas additional aircraft movements from Stansted would have a minimal impact on us.

After discussion, it was agreed not to respond.

e) Mary Phillips re allotments

Mr. Poulton read out the following letter sent to him by Mary Phillips.

‘I feel I must put pen to paper on a matter concerning a piece of allotment. The person concerned has rented it for 3 years and has done nothing to it for all that time except to use it for a dumping ground including lumps of iron.

I think it is inconsiderate of the council to go on letting her do this, with the council having no thought for those around her, the weeds grow up to 2-3 feet tall and we get the seeds blow over to us. We have people on the waiting list who would gladly do it. What is your problem? I would be interested to know. She has a new excuse every year for why she doesn’t do it, I wonder what this years will be.’

Mr. Poulton then read out his reply dated 22nd November.

‘Many thanks for your note regarding the unused allotments.

John Love and I toured the allotment sites in early September and John showed me the three uncultivated sites. I must say that until I received your note I was not aware that one of the sites had not been cultivated for three years.

I reported back to the Parish Council our findings. The Parish Council wrote to all three allotment holders informing them of their obligations under the Tenancy Agreement they had with the Parish Council.

This letter resulted in one of the allotment holders not renewing their tenancy and this area was subsequently relet.

At our last Parish Council meeting John Meischke agreed to personally visit the other two allotment holders and inform them that if they did not cultivate their allotments then they would lose them.

The condition of these two allotments will now be monitored by the Council and the appropriate action taken.’

Refer to item 7 b, Specific items - Update on Allotment rents (on page 3 of these minutes).

10 Reports from other Organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone School Governors**
Mr. Clark said that the Watton-at-Stone School Governors need to elect a non-parent governor and are looking for nominations for the post.
- **Watton-at-Stone Memorial Hall Management Committee**
Mrs. McCash said that the Watton-at-Stone Memorial Hall Management Committee was re-elected during the AGM on 10th November 2005.

11 Items for Parish News

The following items to be sent to the Editor of the Parish News for inclusion in the next issue.

- Salt bins
- Off-roading

Mr. Filer to write the article accordingly.

Action: D. Filer

12 Accounts

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash

Receipts

None

Payments

None

Cheques required

Frank Cooper	Grass cut	41.12
HCC	Photocopy paper	29.86
	Artwork for the Lammas interpretation boards	834.25
Ted Brown	Strimming work	70.00
Nick Whitehead	Sportsfield hedge	376.00
Broxap	Replacement brushes for boot scrapers	264.15
Ted Brown	32 hours litterpicking	208.00
Arro Signs	Byelaw sign for sportsfield	141.00
D. R. Monk	Leaf clearance work	100.00
Insignia Signs	2 interpretation boards	1803.63
Blue Bury Contractors	Flail cut the Lammas and Watton Green	259.09
J. Allsop	December salary	545.01

J. Allsop	Phone calls to 03/12/05 plus acid free paper for minutes	40.00
Paul Borlase	To cut down Ash tree on Perrywood Lane	<u>200.00</u>
		<u>4912.11</u>

Cheques received

Rural Payments Agency	Countryside Stewardship Scheme re the Lammas	346.55
Inland Revenue	Tax rebate for on-line tax return	250.00
Mark Stewart	Allotment rent 2005/06	10.00
Sports and Social Club	¼ year rent	<u>258.75</u>
		<u>865.30</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash

Receipts

Jim Keen – Main Hall	120.00
Jim Keen for bank charges	7.50
Floodlighting to 23.11.05	157.00
Mrs. Hopcroft - Main Hall & Pavilion	50.00
Gill Gilbey – Main Hall hire	30.00
John Murphy – Main Hall	<u>18.00</u>
	<u>382.50</u>

Payments

Diary for 2006		2.50
Banked		602.50
HCC – cleaning materials		<u>27.57</u>
		<u>632.57</u>

Cheques required

J. Phillips	Opening toilets from 5/10/05 – 8/11/05	33.00
Rosemary Brown	27 hours cleaning	162.00
WAS PCC	Community Hall advert	45.00
H M Customs & Excise	VAT return 10.05	85.61
James Turner	Boiler service and repair	<u>211.50</u>
		<u>537.11</u>

Cheques received

Liz Welch	Pavilion hire	97.20
Penny Hurford	Pavilion hire	24.00
Sports and Social Club	¼ year rent	<u>258.75</u>
		<u>379.95</u>

Mrs. McCash proposed that the Parish Council approve the above payments, Mr. Meischke seconded the motion, and all present were in favour.

- **The meeting closed at 2100.**
- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 11th January 2006.**