

Minutes of Ashwell Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 3rd September 2025 at 7pm in the Parish Room

Present: Councillors: Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Joan Yates, Chris Button and Ian Duffy

Also in attendance: Clerk, Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk, Nicky Forrester, Cllr Tyson and 5 members of the public. The meeting was recorded on Zoom, for access to the recording please contact the Clerk clerk@ashwell.gov.uk.

Please see website for appendices issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [Ashwell Village - 2025 Meetings Minutes and Agendas](#).

44 **Apologies for absence** To receive and accept apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllrs Lee who is on holiday and Cllrs Sims, Hoffman and Hall, all of whom were unwell and Cllr Steve Jarvis.

45 **Interests** (a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda, (b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests, and (c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate. Where any declaration of interest involved the Chair, the meeting to agree an alternative individual to take the Chair for that item(s).

Cllr Mahy declared an 'other' interest in agenda item 58.2.3, and agreed that he would leave the room for this item.

46 **Parish Issues and Public Participation** [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)

47 **Minutes Proposal** to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on **6th August 2025**. It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings and resolved that the proposal be accepted unanimously. **Action: Clerk/Chair**

Standing Orders to be suspended

47.1 To hear any new matters raised (members of the public and councillors can raise any Parish related matters).

47.1.1 To receive update to Small Gains Allotments.

Over the next few months the Parish Council is aiming to install a new stopcock to control water to the tank in case of leakage.

47.1.2 To receive update on [street lamp condition project](#). The Clerk requested those councillors who have not submitted their findings to do so please by Monday 22nd September latest.

47.1.3 To note request from [Christy's Kitchens local resident](#).

See full details in the above link.

The proposed idea of a food and drink festival has been put forward as a one day event from 1pm-7pm on either a Saturday or Sunday in June 2026. The proposed idea is approx. 10-12 food and drink traders, music and children's entertainment, whilst introducing a farm to food concept. Ideally the event would attract 500-1000 people throughout the day.

Cllrs asked if there was a charity angle to the event and was advised that this could be considered.

Cllrs also noted that the sport clubs would need to be consulted to ensure it did not clash with events.

Cllrs were generally in favour as they felt it would be enjoyed by many parishioners and that they would submit any questions they had via to Clerk to liaise with the proposer.

Cllr Yates suggested that the local pubs could be impacted but the organiser hoped this would not be the case as those attending the event may be encouraged to use the pubs later into the evening.

The decision to be deferred until all information has been sought. **Action: Clerk**

- 47.1.4 Cllrs resolved to approve the [press release response](#) to be sent to Urban & Civic and that the Clerk would notify parishioners via Newsletter and the HUB of the date of the next Community meeting that includes Urban & Civic on 15th September in Baldock.

Action : Clerk

- 47.1.5 To receive correspondence reference rats at the Springs

Cllrs agreed that announcements had been made via AVN, Newsletters and the HUB asking residents to be mindful of securing food waste and bird food and that compost containers encourage rodents. Clerk to post reminders going forward and to write to Environmental Health for their opinion.

Action: Clerk

- 47.1.6 A parishioner congratulated Cllr Mahy for his transparency on declaring an interest in relation to item 58.2.3 and requested that councillors consider the inconsistency of answering no to Assertion 3 of the 2024/25 AGAR vs not answering no to Assertion 3 of the 2023/24 AGAR.

- 47.2 To receive reports from representatives from outside bodies, local authorities and agencies.

- 47.2.1 To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis, who submitted the following report.

- **Senuna Park bus shelter.** Update has been requested.
- **Tree removal by the bus shelter.** Clerk is liaising with Highways Officer to discuss cost of removing the tree that requires regular cut back due to safety issues at the junction of Lucas Lane/Station Road.
- **Bollards base rust treatment and dropped kerb at the war memorial.** This is agreed but no date set for work to commence as yet.
- **Speed monitoring devices.** One of the items to be covered as part of the review of the speed management strategy is the use of technology to deal with speed issues. One of the changes to the strategy should allow Highways to introduce a 20mph limit in Station Road if that has local support.

- **Buses.** Starting this week there has been a substantial increase in bus services to and from the village. There is now an hourly service to both Royston and Baldock/Letchworth on Mondays to Fridays and a two hourly service on Saturdays. That does mean that there is an hourly service to and from the station during the day (unfortunately none of these services run in the evening). Cllr Yates asked the Clerk to investigate buses to Knights Templar School. **Action : Clerk**
- **Pot holes.** In late September a trial will be run of new cost effective way of fixing potholes. This will be run on rural roads in North Herts. No list of roads is available but it is likely that some roads in the parish (or those leading to it) might be included.
- **Painting of bollards and clearance of vegetation on the Newnham Way footpath.** Awaiting an update on when these jobs are to be scheduled.

47.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

Cllr Tyson is satisfied from dealing with Urban & Civic that they do listen to public opinion and parishioners should continue to submit questions and enquiries to:
growingbaldock@urbanandcivic.com

There is a public meeting on 15th September at the Community Centre Main Hall, Baldock SG7 6DH at 7.15pm. Click link for full details <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-forums>. Various topics to be discussed including: Growing Baldock, CCTV presentation NHC, Water Authorities & Q&A

Bins now appear to be working relatively smoothly for Ashwell, other villages still experiencing some problems. Cllr Tyson is happy for anyone to contact him should they experience any issues.

Local Government Reform. Current proposals are that Hertfordshire should have 2, 3 or 4 councils. There is an informal consultation over the next few weeks prior to a submission to the Government at the end of November. This is the link on the local Government reorganisation with a survey open to the public although the closing date is unknown.
<https://www.hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk/proposed-options>

The make-up of the suggested unitaries is as follows:

The first option would replace the existing 11 councils with two unitary authorities, slicing the county into east and west. **East** would comprise districts currently covered by Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield. **West** would include Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers and Watford councils.

Under the three-council proposal, the county would be split into: **East** – Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts and Stevenage; **West** – Dacorum, Three Rivers and Watford areas, as well as the Bushey North and Bushey South county council electoral divisions; **Central** – Hertsmere, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (without Bushey North and Bushey South).

The third option under consideration would split the county into four: **West** – Dacorum and St Albans; **South-West** – Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford; **Central** – most of North Herts and Welwyn Hatfield plus Stevenage; **East** – Broxbourne and East Herts with the existing North Herts district wards of Royston Heath, Royston Palace, Royston Meridian, Ermine, Weston & Sandon and Arbury, and the Welwyn Hatfield ward of Northaw and Cuffley.

A parishioner spoke at this point of the meeting see item 47.1.6 above

Standing Orders to be reinstated

- 48 Reports from Working Groups.** To receive oral updates from relevant leaders/members and agree any actions that require Parish Council input/approval.

Planning Advisory Working Group - To note, any further information regarding S106.

The timeframe of the transfer of ownership of open space offered by the developer at the Hunts Ridge development is urgent and clarification regarding S106 agreement and timescales with sequence of events are to be sought from the Planning Officer.

Action: Clerk

- 48.1** Access to Ashwell station includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. To note any update to [communications between APC and MP Chris Hinchliffe \(Cllr Lee\)](#). No further updates. Clerk to send a reminder letter to Chris Hinchliffe.

Action: Clerk

- 48.2** To receive update - Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group. (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). No further updates.

- 49 Trees and Hedges (Cllr Sims) – To note any updates** - Clerk advised 3 TCA's have been received after the agenda was published and therefore these cannot be discussed. The Clerk will request extension dates to enable discussion at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

- 50 Planning matters: to include new and existing applications.** To see full details of applications on the [NHC website](#) enter the reference number into the planning search box.

- 51 New consultations received from NHC. To note any correspondence and agree responses.**

- 51.1 25/01929/FP** : Erection of detached dwelling and detached garage : Land east of 2 Scarp Close, Ashwell, SG7 5FP. Cllr Yates feels it is good use of the land. Cllr Mahy raised concerns of the application in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan and noted that the Study has a proposed ensuite which could make the dwelling a 4 bed dwelling which is contrary to the NP. It was noted that the ridgeline may be visible from the skyline on the approach to the village. One Cllr objected to the planning application and 3 Cllrs abstained. Clerk to write to Planning Officer to advise that the application is not supported but should it go ahead to take account of the above comments.

Action: Clerk

- 51.2 25/02075/FPH** : Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing rear conservatory. Bay window extension to lounge with extended porch canopy over front door and alterations to existing detached garage to facilitate partial conversion to create guest accommodation. Installation of flue following removal chimney stacks and external cladding (revision of previously approved planning permission 25/01171/FPH granted 06.08.2025) : 15 Swan Street, Ashwell.

Cllrs resolved to support the application as existing plans were minimal. Clerk to notify Planning Officer.

Action : Clerk

- 52 Current Applications:** any updates to 24/01444/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing), (Hunts Close). To note any updates. See above item 48.1

- 53 Footpath at Townsend Meadow** - To note any updates from [letter to North Herts Council](#). No further updates. Cllr Tyson has written to NHC Planning Enforcement again. To-date it has been between Highways and Developer to resolve. The time taken for action is frustrating and prolonged and Cllr Tyson agreed to communicate APC's comments to NHC. Cllr Duffy raised a potential dropped kerb issue that Cllr Tyson agreed to also communicate.

Action: Cllr Tyson

54 **Planning Summary** – to note updates.

55 **Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC.** Ashwell Parish Council has no objections to TCAs listed below:

55.1 25/01977/TCA : 42 Back Street, Ashwell : Yew tree fell.

55.2 25/02122/TCA : 50 Gardiners Lane : Willow – fell to ground.

55.3 25/02151/TCA : 105 High Street : Nordmann Fir, fell to ground.

55.4 To note the [Tree Planning Summary](#)

56 Reports from Committees

56.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral reports and agree any actions.

It was proposed that Cllr Yates join the HR Committee to assist with staff appraisals. Cllrs resolved to approve.

57 Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities. To receive oral reports and agree any actions needed.

57.1 The Springs Report from Cllr Hoffman - To discuss replacement of current permanent sign and replace with [new larger signs](#) to allow more information to be displayed. Approximate total cost is £1100. It was resolved to approve the proposal but Cllr Button asked the Clerk to enquire with the Water Authority if funds may be available as the Springs are SSSI.

Action: Clerk

57.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman. Nothing to report.

57.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets.

To receive any updates from [Pavilion Working Party](#). The August meeting of the working group did not take place.

Cllr Yates enquired if the children's play area could be considered to have an interim injection of refurbishment as some equipment is tired and outdated. Examples of proposed equipment and prices to be considered at a future meeting. Deputy Clerk to establish prices of supply and installation costs.

Action: Deputy Clerk

To receive feedback regarding dogs at the rec and suggestion of [permanent external signs](#). Cost of 3 aluminium signs to keep dogs on a lead is circa £51 Cllrs resolved to approve purchase and asked Clerk if a more strongly worded sign was available.

Action: Clerk

57.4 Small Gains and Track – To note any updates (Cllr Sims). See item 47.1.1 above.

57.5 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy. Clean up in October to be scheduled. Deputy Clerk and Cllr Mahy to carry out pre tidy-up survey.

Action: Deputy Clerk/Cllr Mahy

57.6 Street furniture - To note any updates Cllr Mahy. Cllr Mahy to confirm identified bins with NHC have been removed.

Action: Cllr Mahy

58 Finance and Governance

58.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts and bank reconciliation. To note the information up to month end to be circulated to parish councillors after the end of the month. Proposal that the summary of receipts and payments be issued with the draft minutes and the two nominated parish councillors sign off the accounts in accordance with internal control procedures. To note any variances of actual expenditure compared to budget.

58.2 Budget 2025/26 Update – To note any updates.

58.2.1 To receive an oral update on proposed Fees for Club use of Rec & Pavilion.

Potential for ACCIES to take the vacant slot made by the senior football club. No proposal to approve until agreed final fees are finalised. Chair to also approach Cubs, Scouts and other clubs to make a contribution. Any contract would need a break-clause should work on the Pavilion commence. Grounds Maintenance would also need to be considered.

Action: Cllrs Lee, Button, Yates, Deputy Clerk

58.2.2 To note and approve [Insurance renewal](#) for 2025/26 due 1st October, cost **£4,549.85** See full [Insurance Schedule](#).

Cllrs resolved to approve the insurance renewal payment.

58.2.3 Annual Audit for the 2023/24 financial year.

- To note the [Formal Response made to the External Auditor by the Objector](#). Cllrs noted that the Objector had made their Formal Response to the External Auditor.
- To propose for approval, Ashwell Parish Council's formal response to the External Auditor. [APC's Notes to Objectors formal response to auditor dated 13th August 2025 subject title: Agreeing the Basic Facts](#) and [APC's Formal Response to Objections 2, 3 & 4](#).

(Draft Minutes amended on 10.09.2025, a proposal to approve these September Minutes will be at the APC meeting, scheduled for 01.10.2025)

Cllr Mahy, having made a declaration of interest left the room. The Clerk requested councillors to nominate and vote a new Chair for this item (58.2.3). Cllr Button was nominated as Chair and Cllrs resolved to approve.

Cllr Button put forward a proposal to amend the formal response to include clarification on the process of interaction with the Objector and to add that APC initiated a meeting with the Objector in February 2025 to try to resolve issues. An invitation to further resolve was issued to the Objector on 7th August but as of the (28.08.2025) APC had received no response from the Objector.

Cllr Button queried if the comment made by the Objector underneath item 47.1.6 should too be included in APC's formal response questioning if it was or was not factually correct?

The Clerk advised the deadline for APC to submit their formal response to the external auditor was 4th September 2025 and that the response should be

approved at full Council meeting. The Clerk advised Cllrs to approve the draft at the meeting subject to making an amendment to include the comment by the Objector.

The Chair adjourned the meeting whilst discussion took place at 1.31hrs

During this time the Clerk and Cllrs Yates & Button approached Cllr Mahy outside of the room but Cllr Mahy did not discuss due to his declaration of interest.

The meeting went back into session at 1.43hrs

Cllr Button proposed to approve the APC Formal Response to the External Auditor adding an addition to include the point raised in item 47.1.6 above by the Objector ie the alleged inconsistency answering “no” to Assertion 3 of the 2024/25 AGAR vs not answering “no” to Assertion 3 of the 2023/24 AGAR.

Cllrs resolved to approve both proposals. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Mahy resumed his position of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

58.2.4 Audit for the 2024/25 financial year – Internal Auditor has signed and authorised the 2024-25 audit and all documents have been sent to the External Auditor. No further updates received from the External Auditor.

59 **Date of next meeting** : 1st October 2025 at 7pm in the Parish Room.

The meeting closed at 20.50 hrs