

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors Peter Long (Chairman), Mike Berry, Jane Buxton, John Connolly, David Cook, Martin Hoffman, Bridget Macey, Daniel Mathews, Christine Schwick, Mark White.

The Clerk was also in attendance.

Members of the public: Three parishioners, the Rev'd Chris Ball and PCSO Chris Braybrook.

**52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Cllr Connolly apologised for his late arrival.

**53. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012**

It was *resolved* that these be approved and signed.

**54. MATTERS OF REPORT** From previous meetings:

**54.1** (August Council 43.1) Localism Act/Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. It was reported that further correspondence had been received via HAPTC from NALC. This informed that a new template code had been issued on August 9<sup>th</sup> to incorporate the Department of Community and Local Government's definition of disclosable pecuniary interests. The advice from HAPTC and NALC was that this amended code should now be adopted.

It was reported that the Monitoring Officer at NHDC had been informed that Ashwell Parish Council would be considering the adoption of this amended code at its September Council meeting and Declarations of Interest forms for the register would be forwarded to him within 28 days of adoption. Once all forms had been completed they would be placed on the Parish Council's website. **Clerk/ALL**

It was *resolved* that the latest NALC version be adopted; it was noted that this included only very minor changes from the code adopted at the August Council meeting.

It was noted that the Parish Council's Standing Orders would now need to be reviewed following adoption of a new code. Cllr Daniel Mathews agreed to consider necessary changes and make proposals. **DMM**

**55. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**55.1** Letter from Local Works - 'a not for profit organisation campaigning for a vibrant, inclusive democracy, putting power in the hands of the people' - request to contribute to campaign re Sustainable Communities Act. It was agreed that no action be taken.

**55.2** Letter from Parishioner Jill Powell on behalf of the Jubilee working group asking whether the Parish Council had considered a permanent tribute in the village to celebrate the Jubilee. It was noted that a village sign had been proposed; following initial design suggestions, some minor amendments had been suggested. Cllr Christine Schwick agreed to progress the project. **CVS**

It was reported that the Jubilee group also wished to stage a photographic exhibition covering both the Jubilee and Olympics celebrations. It was agreed that the Parish Council would be supportive of this.

**55.3** Copy of email from Parishioner Christine Scholfield to County Councillor Tony Hunter; thanks re expenditure from his discretionary highways budget for new dropped kerb in Bacons Yard to facilitate access for residents of Wolverley House. It was reported that positive comments had also been received from other parishioners.

**55.4** Email re Robert Skerman memorial bench from Parishioner Dean Welby 'his nick name is Robert the bouncer and not Robert the bounce'. It was reported that no other parishioner had raised any concerns re the wording and it had been discussed with relatives prior to installation of the plaque. It was agreed that the parishioner's concerns be noted. **Clerk**

**56. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**56.1** Notifications from NHDC as Planning Authority

Application no. 11/02885/1 Land adjacent to 92 Ashwell Street.

For North Herts Homes

Outline Planning Permission: Erection of detached bungalow (all matters reserved).

Outline conditional permission.

**56.2** Application no.12/01829/1LB for 57 High Street. Alterations to first floor landing window. It was noted that no site visit had been undertaken as the application was for listed building consent only and was for a minor amendment to a scheme of works previously considered. It was also noted that the Conservation Officer had already recommended approval. It was agreed, in line with usual procedures, that a response letter would be sent to NHDC. **Clerk**

**56.3** Application no. 12/01356/1 Land rear of 48 Ashwell Street. For Alexandre Developments

Full Planning Permission: Increase in roof heights to plots 1 and 2 and set deeper into slope of land. Insertion of two rear dormer windows, replacement of pitched roof over first floor front window with monopitch roof and insertion of two rooflights to front roof elevation to plots 1 and 2 (as a variation to Planning application 02/01927/1 granted 21/10/2003).

It was noted that the NHDC Planning Control Committee had voted in favour of granting permission by seven votes to five. It was noted that the objections from the Parish Council and neighbours, including the school, had been supported by District Councillor Andrew Young. The Chairman thanked Cllr David Cook for speaking on behalf of the Parish Council and the school, and also other parish councillors who lent their support by attending. The Parish Council had received a letter of thanks from Parishioner Pasquale Mansi.

Parish councillors expressed their concerns that, whilst this application was very similar to a previous application that the committee had unanimously rejected, approval had been granted.

Parish councillors who had attended expressed their concerns about the way in which the application had been handled at the committee meeting. They were of the view that the members did not seem to have always been adequately briefed by officers. This seemed to have led to their confusion over certain aspects of the application, eg relative roof heights, and also what courses of action were open to them, eg imposition of conditions re windows. With regard to conditions that were imposed, there was concern as to how adequately these would be enforced.

Following discussion it was agreed that there was a danger of a precedent being set and the Parish Council wished its concerns to be noted.

It was agreed that a letter outlining the concerns noted be drafted by the Chairman; it was proposed that this be addressed to the head of planning at NHDC and copied to the CEO, District Councillor Andrew Young and Oliver Heald, MP.

**WPL**

**56.4** Development at The Knoll, Claybush Road (see also minute 62.2). It was understood that this was the subject of a repossession order. It was agreed that the Planning Officer be asked for clarification on this and, in particular, outstanding enforcement issues.

**Clerk**

**56.5** Planning permission for Whitby Farm and 35 High Street. It was noted that the Planning Officer at NHDC had previously agreed to forward copies of documents re the conditions imposed (relating to highways and sewerage). It was reported that the NHDC Planning Officer had forwarded a letter from Anglian Water reiterating the stance that the new development would not adversely affect the sewerage system in the village.

**56.6** Section 106 funds. It was noted that the previous approach to achieving release of funds allocated for Ashwell held by NHDC had not been particularly successful; applications had been made for specific items to match funds already held. It had been proposed that a better system would be to take a more proactive approach and to keep NHDC informed of all expenditure where development placed an additional burden on the infrastructure of the community. It was agreed that all committee chairmen would review their respective responsibilities to support this. Cllr Cook agreed to investigate further how this was handled by other parishes.

**DMM/MGH/MWB/DC**

**56.7** Winter schedule of Planning Committee meetings. It was agreed that these be scheduled as previously ie, alternating between Saturdays at 8.30am and Sundays at 9.00am approximately every 3 weeks; the Clerk would distribute a timetable.

**Clerk**

**57. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mike Berry)

(draft minutes meeting Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July supplied; next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September)

**57.1** Meeting with the local highways officer and County Councillor Tony Hunter. Cllr Mike Berry reported that requests had been made re a long list of issues, both general and specific. These had included hedges, white-lining and bollards. Some positive responses had been received. Additional complaints from parishioners re vegetation in Kingsland Way and the poor state of the footway out to Sunnymead Orchard were noted; action on both issues had already been requested and would continue to be pursued. Concerns re the verges in Hodwell would be added to the list.

**57.2** Response from Herts Highways re winter salting schedules and bins. Cllr Berry reported a disappointing response to requests for salting of the junction of Bear Lane/ Silver Street/ Back Street by the school and for an additional salt bin in Dixies Close to serve the twitchells.

**57.3** Additional items to be requested were noted (i) fitting of rubber bushes to the gravel trap at Partridge Hill, (ii) overgrown hedges on Newnham Way.

## **58. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Daniel Mathews)

(Next meeting scheduled for Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October)

**58.1** (August Council, 43.4) Merchant Taylors Close. Cllr Christine Schwick, as member responsible for the area, reported that the builder's materials had now been removed from the footpath and the grassed area; she was of the view that the latter would recover in time. Arrangements would now be made for the Parish Council's contractor to cut the hedges.

**Clerk**

## **59. REPORT FROM CHARACTER AREAS COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Martin Hoffman)

Re the Springs.

**59.1.** Cllr Hoffman reported that the RoSPA inspection had taken place but the report received had omitted the risk assessment. The supplier was rectifying this and it was expected next week. Following receipt an on-site committee meeting would be scheduled.

**59.2** Cllr Hoffman reported that, following agreement to tighten the policy on dogs (only dogs on leads to be allowed), temporary publicity had been undertaken and site notices amended. One email had been received from a parishioner objecting to the new policy. It was noted that complaints re poorly controlled dogs had been an issue for many years and the policy had not been changed in response to an isolated incident. It was not possible to police the area or to differentiate between good and bad dog owners.

**Clerk**

## **60. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(next meeting scheduled for Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October)

**60.1** 2011-12 audit. The Chairman reported that a clean report had been received from the External Auditor; publicity requirements had been undertaken.

**60.2** The Chairman reported that a new Environmental Cleansing Officer had been appointed. It was noted that, as he was the spouse of Cllr Jane Buxton, she would include this in her register of interests. It was noted that the wages of the Environmental Cleansing Officer formed part of the monthly accounts presented for approval.

It was **resolved** that this be noted and dispensation given to Cllr Buxton re the regular approval of the monthly accounts.

**60.3** Rural grant bid to NHDC. It was agreed that, as in previous years, an application be submitted to the Environment Fund. It was noted that this was now capped at £1,000. As any funds received were used to support the costs of the Environmental Cleansing Officer it was agreed that all committee chairmen review the application prior to signature by the Chairman and submission to NHDC by the deadline of 28<sup>th</sup> September.

**DMM/MGH/MWB/WPL/Clerk**

**60.4** Approval of September Accounts and Bills for Payment. It was noted that this included the annual insurance premium; the situation re inclusion of the Ashwell Village Trust was still to be clarified. **Clerk**  
It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid.

## **61. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**61.1 Website Group** Cllr Daniel Mathews presented a written proposal and quote for a new website. It was agreed that this be progressed. **DMM**

**61.2 Yearbook Group** Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 2nd October.

**61.3 Design Statement Review Group** Nothing to report.

### **61.4 Community Housing Group**

**61.4.1** New social housing. Concerns were again expressed that there was no progress to report from Howard Cottage Housing Association. It was agreed to request a report for the next Council meeting.

**Clerk**

**61.4.2 North Herts Homes.** Cllr Peter Long reported that he and Cllr Bridget Macey had attended the recent stakeholders meeting. This had covered practical rather than strategic issues; they had both felt that it was a good meeting.

## **62. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM**

It was ***resolved*** that Standing Orders be suspended for this item; taken at 8.30pm.

**62.1 Church Clock chimes.** It was noted that the full Westminster chimes, on the hour and every quarter, had now been restored. Parishioner Oliver Kirkby expressed the view that the full chimes added greatly to the character of the village and was keen that they continue to chime throughout the day and night. Parishioner Olivia Hall questioned whether it was reasonable or necessary to have quarterly chimes throughout the night. Parishioner Julian Hall supported her view. Cllr Christine Schwick reported that correspondence had been received from eight parishioners, including Mrs Hall. Four were in favour of keeping the now fully restored chimes on at all times and four were against, wishing that the quarter chimes be turned off at night. Requests had been made to investigate whether the latter was technically feasible.

The Chairman reported that it was the belief of the Parish Council that the majority of the village liked the chimes and had been in favour of them being restored to their previous full quarterly setting. It was noted that at the last two Annual Parish Meetings there had been pressure from parishioners to get the works to the clock completed and the chimes restored. The Parish Council felt that this mandate could not be altered without new evidence of support from those against. It was also noted that the majority of individuals who were disturbed by night-time noise adapted to it and tolerated it without disturbance of sleep after a period of time. The Chairman proposed that the situation be reviewed in one month.

**62.2 Police.** The Chairman thanked PCSO Chris Braybrook for his attendance. PCSO Braybrook reported that the village had generally been quiet with few incidents. Those to note had been (i) metal thefts, (ii) thefts from the re-possessed property, The Knoll, on Claybush Road; he appealed for all to report any suspicious behaviour, (iii) anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground and Arbury Banks

**62.3 Volunteer speeding patrols.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that more volunteers were being recruited and monitoring was going well.

**62.4 First Aid course.** An email had been received from Parishioner Jackie Embury re her co-ordination of a course for representatives of community groups. Names of councillors who expressed an interest would be forwarded. **Clerk**

**62.5 School.** Cllr David Cook, in his role as school governor, reported his intention to promote ways to facilitate the smooth transfer of village children from a small primary school to a large secondary.

**Meeting closed at 9.15pm**

## **Appendix 1 – General material received**

### **Hard copy – ‘Items on the table’**

1. North Herts District Council ‘Members Information’ w/e 3, 10, 17, 24 August.
2. Health and Wellbeing Theme Partnership 2012-13 Grant; bids to NHDC by 1<sup>st</sup> October.  
By Email
3. HAPTC Briefings and Bulletins.
4. *Rural News* from PC Marina

