

## Ashwell Parish Council

### Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm

**Present:** Councillors W P Long (Chairman), M W Berry, E J Buxton,  
M G Hoffman, D M Mathews (with apologies for late arrival), C V Schwick, M N White.  
The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Two for item 145.1.2.

#### **134. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

D Cook (work commitment), J Connolly (away), G K Scott (work commitment), B Macey (unwell).

#### **135. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 7<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

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

**136. CODE OF CONDUCT/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** Item 143.2, grant to Village Hall, Cllr Schwick declared a prejudicial interest (husband provided loan to trustees for refurbishment programme). It was noted that the Standards Board had now been abolished. It was agreed that the requirements of the Localism Act be considered by the Finance Committee and proposals made to the May Council meeting.

**Finance C'tee**

#### **137. MATTERS OF REPORT**

**137.1** (March 126.1) Consultation on London Luton airport expansion proposals. It was noted that Cllr Berry had attended a briefing meeting at North Herts District Council (NHDC) and had circulated brief notes; concerns raised had included increased noise and traffic.

**137.2** (March 126.6) Consultation on NHDC 'Local Development Framework –Core Strategy New Housing Growth Targets. It was noted that a response had been sent by the Chairman on behalf of the Parish Council supporting the 7,000 homes option preferred by NHDC and opposing greenfield development. He had asked that the Parish Council be kept informed of future consultations and had stressed the established need for 16 units of social housing within the village.

**137.3** (March 127.3.2) Sewerage concerns.

**137.3.1.** Email from Anglian Water giving results of its recent survey covering parts of Station Road, Hodwell and High Street to identify whether any structural repairs or changes to current maintenance regimes were necessary. Anglian Water had informed that there were no structural defects requiring attention but there were 'a number of service issues which will require attention'; they were to 'arrange for sewer jetting to cleanse the pipes and for some minor tree root removal to be undertaken.' It was assumed that recent activity in the village was related to this. Concern was expressed that the authorities had still not agreed to undertake a full survey in order to assess current and future capacity of the system; it was agreed that this request be reiterated

**Clerk**

**137.3.2** Email from residents of 2 West End reporting a severe incident in which sewage had flooded their garden and had only been prevented from entering the house by prompt action and sandbagging. Similar problems had been encountered in May 2010 and January 2011. Anglian Water had refused to accept any liability 'or clean up any further than a quick bit of pressure hosing and have suggested that we contact the Parish Council in order that they start a campaign to urge appropriate use of the sewers.' It was noted that similar complaints had been reported to the Annual Parish Meeting; it had been agreed to cover sewerage problems in the next *Ashwell Village News* report with a plea for all incidents to be reported to the Parish Council. A record of problems would be kept and used as evidence when requesting action from the authorities.

**Clerk/WPL**

**137.4** Minutes of North Herts Association of Town, Parish and Community Councils meeting 14<sup>th</sup> March. Cllr White reported that he and Cllr Macey had attended; membership costs would be £20 per year. The meeting had noted that there was still some funding available in the 'rural pot' and it was likely that this would be made available for training.

**137.5** To note meetings scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> May. AGM of the Ashwell Village Trust at 7.45 pm, followed by the AGM of the Allotment for Exercise and Recreation, followed by the AGM of the Parish Council at 8pm.

Item pending.

**137.6** (February 115.4.2) Section 106 payments. Cllr Cook proposed a review of the way in which the Parish Council currently approached these. Following discussion it was agreed that this would be of merit and Cllr Cook agreed to draft a proposal.

**DC**

### **138. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**138.1** Letter from HCC re draft Rural Transport Strategy consultation. Deadline for response 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012; details available on [www.hertsdirect.org/ltp](http://www.hertsdirect.org/ltp). Cllr Mathews agreed to review and report back as necessary. **DMM**

**138.2** Invitation from NHDC to attend Planning and Building Control Customer Liaison Panel meeting, Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 8.00am

**138.3** Email from 'voucherbook-villagemag' requesting information on Ashwell to support publication of Annual Guide/Directory to Baldock & Ashwell. Concern was expressed that this type of publication competed with community publications such as the Yearbook and Ashwell Show programme for advertising. It was thus agreed that the Parish Council would not offer any support. **Clerk**

**138.4** Letter from Anglian Water re drought situation and hosepipe ban from 5<sup>th</sup> April. It was reported that, despite requests direct to the water company, confusion still existed as to whether authorities such as local councils could use hosepipes to water public recreation facilities such as sports fields. The question had been put to officers at NHDC; they were still awaiting clarification themselves. It was agreed that until clarification was received, hosepipes would not be used at the Recreation Ground. It was noted that this was the only Parish Council land that would be impacted by the ban, the watering of the new landscaping at the Cemetery was being undertaken by the contractor with a tanker. **Clerk**

**138.5** Letter from Parishioner Margaret Wallace raising concerns at the new sign outside Wolverley House. It was noted that the matter had been reported to the Annual Parish Meeting; others had concurred with Mrs Wallace's view that the sign was out of keeping in a village and a conservation area. It was agreed to clarify with the Planning Officer any regulations that might apply and to write to North Herts Homes (copy to District Councillor Andrew Young) requesting that it be removed and replaced with something more suitable. **Clerk**

**138.6** Email from local Liberal Democrat leader Steve Jarvis in response to letter sent to Ian Simpson. He expressed surprise at the comment from the Parish Council that NHDC was not prepared to enforce parking restrictions, 'I have always been assured that the council's enforcement officers visit the location of all waiting restrictions in the district from time to time ... I would be grateful if you would let me know since this would clearly be of concern across the district'. It was agreed that Cllr Berry respond; Clerk to supply relevant documents. **MWB**

**138.7** Copy of email to Churchwarden Andrew Gillborn from Parishioner Wendy Rose expressing concern at proposals to build a new rectory on a site in the conservation area; she felt this would set a precedent and there were 'plenty of other houses' already in the village. It was agreed that the email be acknowledged. **Clerk**

### **139. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE**

(see 145.1 below re pre-application advice to developers)

#### **139.1 Decisions by NHDC as Planning Authority**

**139.1.1** Application no. 12/00209/1LB For Mr and Mrs Hall. The Rectory, Hodwell.

Listed Building: Alteration to door and window openings in single storey wings including reinstatement of walling and plinths. Internal minor alterations including change to layout with removal of modern partitions, refurbishment of fireplaces, blocking of existing and new first floor doorways. Installation of insulation to external walls and related works to historic fabric. Conditional Listed Building Consent.

**139.1.2** Application no. 12/00338/1TCA

69 High Street (Rose & Crown) For Greene King plc. Removal of one Ash tree. No objections.

#### **139.2 Applications to NHDC as Planning Authority.**

**139.2.1** Application no. 12/00338/1TCA

69 High Street (Rose & Crown) For Greene King plc. Removal of Leylandii.

**139.3** Meetings schedule for April to September. It was agreed that these be on the first and third Wednesdays of the month (next meeting scheduled for 7.30pm 18<sup>th</sup> April).

### **140. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Berry)

(Draft minutes meeting 29<sup>th</sup> March distributed; next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May)

In addition Cllr Berry reported

**140.1** Herts Highways had posted notices warning of road closures in connection with surface repairs to Station Road from the Northfields Road junction to the War Memorial. It was agreed to check that the garage had been informed and to ensure that access to the Cemetery was maintained for burials if needed.

**Clerk**

**140.2** Requests for additional white lines to deter parking in unsuitable locations had been sent to Herts Highways in July 2011. As no action had been taken these had been reviewed, updated and would now be re-sent.

**MWB**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mathews)

(Draft minutes meeting 19<sup>th</sup> March distributed; next meeting scheduled for Monday 21st May)

In addition Cllr Mathews reported

**141.1** A Grounds Maintenance Officer was to be appointed.

**141.2** Transfer of the management of the toilets at the Recreation Ground from NHDC had been delayed whilst it dealt with required personnel matters. Transfer would now take effect from May 1<sup>st</sup>; the formal agreement was to be signed and returned. Quotations for various aspects of management were being obtained.

**Clerk**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Hoffman)

(Draft minutes meeting 4<sup>th</sup> April to be distributed)

**142.1** Cllr Hoffman reported a request from the Olympics Celebrations Group to hold the finale of the village torch relay at the Springs; this would include the lighting of a beacon. The committee had discussed the request and was of the view that the site was not suitable for a large number of people both for their safety and to prevent damage to the site. There were also concerns at the lighting of a beacon and the fire risk to vegetation. The views of the committee were concurred with; it was noted that alternative sites had been suggested.

#### **143. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Long)

(Draft minutes meeting Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012 distributed; next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April)

**143.1** Report from meeting with representative of Came & Company, Parish Council's insurers. The Chairman reported that quotations had been requested for some additions and changes. The feasibility and costs of incorporating other village groups had also been requested (see also 143.2 below).

**143.2** Provision for additional clerical work. It was noted that, following the report to the March Council meeting (133.2) by Village Hall representative Cllr White, it had been agreed to consider the pros and cons of various options. Considerable savings in the cost of insurance and VAT could be achieved by the Village Hall, and other village groups such as Moss Cottage Homes and the Cottage Garden, if they were more closely linked with the Parish Council. The Village Hall had expressed the need for assistance with clerical work; community groups found it increasingly difficult to find volunteers to undertake this work. The proposal had been made for the Parish Council to offer clerical services to charitable groups in the village in return for payment, the cost of this being covered by the savings made in insurance etc. The Chairman reported that he had discussed with the Clerk, in principle, the appointment of an assistant clerk. It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for the Clerk to report her views.

The Clerk reported that Ashwell was defined as an LC2 level council and she was currently remunerated at the lower end of the appropriate pay scale. The hours paid were 22 per week although in reality the job was full-time; it was thus not feasible for her to take on any additional responsibilities. Although Ashwell had always been an active parish council, the clerk's workload had increased considerably over the past few years. It was a problem faced by many organisations, not just parish councils; individuals led increasingly full and busy lives and volunteers with time available were fewer. Appointing an assistant would also have benefits for the Parish Council, sickness and holiday cover, for example, could be put onto a firmer footing. There would be some practical issues to address such as provision of office space but her view of the proposal was positive and that it should be progressed.

It was **resolved** that Finance Committee discuss further and make detailed proposals.

**Finance C'tee**

**143.3** Approval of April Accounts and Bills for Payment (see 136 above for declaration of interest)

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

**Clerk**

## 144. REPORTS FROM WORKING PARTIES

**144.1 Website Group** (Chairman Cllr Mathews) Cllr Mathews reported that he had investigated the website of Steeple Morden Parish Council and had formed a positive view. Costs for various options had been requested. **Clerk**

**144.2 Quality Status Group** (Chairman Cllr Hoffman)

**144.2.1** Negotiations with NHDC re future of toilets at the pavilion (see 141.2 above).

**144.3 Yearbook Group** (Chairman Cllr Long) It was noted that a meeting to review the 2012 edition was scheduled for Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April. Concerns were expressed at the quality of the black and white photos.

**144.4 Design Statement Review Group** (Chairman Cllr Long) Cllr Long reported that the meeting with Area Planning Officer Richard Tiffin had been postponed due to illness and was to be rescheduled.

**144.5 Community Housing Group** (Chairman Cllr Buxton) It was agreed that the Chairman contact John Welch, the CEO of Howard Cottage Housing Association, to determine progress.

**144.6 Jubilee Group** It was reported that plans were well in hand for celebrations on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

**144.7 Olympics Group** It was reported that arrangements for Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July including insurance cover and details of the torch relay around the village were to be finalised (see 142.1 above).

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

It was **resolved** that Standing Orders be suspended for this item.

**145.1** Pre-application presentations from representatives re proposed planning applications. The Chairman wished it to be noted that no formal planning applications had yet been made to the Planning Authority, NHDC, and reminded all parish councillors that any discussions at this 'pre-application' stage were subject to very strict rules designed to avoid any allegation of pre-determination or bias.

**145.1.1** Land adjacent to 10 Green Lane. It was reported that the agent had been unable to attend; it was agreed that an invitation to the June Council meeting be extended (the May meeting being the AGM of the Parish Council and village charities). He would also be forwarded the minutes of the Parish Council Planning Committee meeting in July 2011 which considered the previous application. **Clerk**

**145.1.2** 40 Kingsland Way (Mr Jeremy Osborne and Mr Mark Longworth re lapsed application for 3 houses). It was noted that the Parish Council Planning Committee had considered an outline application for three houses in December 2004. Approval had been recommended and subsequently granted by NHDC; there had been some concerns re the access road. The representatives reported that the proposals for three detached houses remained the same and detailed plans for a full planning application were now being drawn up. The *Ashwell Village Design Statement* had been referred to and consideration given to concerns expressed by the Parish Council in other recent applications, eg roof heights and their impact on the skyline, parking provision and adequacy of sewerage. With regard to sewerage, new building regulations required greater water efficiency. Parking provision would be higher than the local standard requirement. Concerns expressed previously re the access road had been addressed.

The Chairman summarised the response of councillors. The advice at this pre-application stage was that they ensure the following were fully considered (i) the *Ashwell Village Design Statement* (ii) adequacy of sewerage, (iii) previously expressed concerns re the access road.

**145.2** Matters of report from the Annual Parish Meeting. Disappointment was expressed that numbers of parishioners attending was again low and the worth of such meetings questioned. It was agreed to consider the options available.

**145.3** Henry Colbron Trust. It was reported that the official notice from the trustees had been posted around the village and distributed to village youth groups. The deadline for applications was 19<sup>th</sup> April and representatives of the trustees were to visit the village on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

**145.4** Village sign proposals. Cllr Schwick reported that she was still pursuing proposals for this.

**145.5** Speed monitoring. Cllr Hoffman reported that two more parishioners had volunteered to join the group. All volunteers had to undertake training so that data could be logged onto the national system, otherwise no police action would result. Currently operatives borrowed the necessary equipment but he was of the view that the scheme would work more efficiently and thus be more effective if the parish purchased its own. He proposed that results obtained using the latest model be assessed before a decision was made on this.

(Re Village Hall see 143.2 above)

**Meeting closed at 9.20pm**

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

### **Items on the table**

**1.** North Herts District Council ‘Members Information’ w/e 9, 16, 23, 30 March.

### **By Email**

**2.** HAPTC Weekly Briefings.

**3** *Rural News* from PC Marina

**4.** CDA for Herts Bulletin and information from ACRE on village halls.