

## Ashwell Parish Council

### Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm

**Present:** Councillors W P Long (Chairman), M W Berry, E J Buxton, D Cook  
M G Hoffman, B Macey, D M Mathews, C V Schwick, M N White.

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: PCC representatives, Andrew Gillborn and John Rowlands (see item 121.1).

#### 110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

J Connolly (work commitment), G K Scott (work commitment).

#### 111. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012

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

#### 112. CODE OF CONDUCT/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None.

#### 113. MATTERS OF REPORT

**113.1** (January 102.3) Veolia consultation on Draft Drought Management Plan. It was reported that a letter had been received from Oliver Heald, MP, expressing support for the Parish Council's comments and giving detail of his actions re chalk-fed streams in general and specifically the Springs.

**113.2** (January 102.4) Rural broadband grant fund. It was reported that a general letter had been received from HCC giving further information and confirming the view reported last month by Cllr Mathews that this funding source was not appropriate for parishes such as Ashwell.

**113.3** (January 103.1) Further general information on insurance cover from Came & Company Parish Council Insurers. It was agreed to request that Cllr Scott review and report back. A meeting with the new local representative was pending this.

**GKS**

#### 114. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

**114.1** Copy of letter from Parishioner John Hare to Veolia Water expressing his continuing concerns re inadequacy of supply. The Chairman reported that, at his request, letters had been sent to Veolia and Anglian Water reporting the Parish Council's concerns re the adequacy of the village's infrastructure. These related not only to the ability of the infrastructure to cope at present but more importantly, with on-going development, the future capacity. A call had been received from Anglian Water indicating that they would consider this request; contact details at the NHDC Planning Department had been supplied.

**114.2** Email from Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer at NHDC, re Review of Street Cleansing, with a request for completion of a survey; deadline 15<sup>th</sup> February (with his apologies for short notice). It was agreed that the Streets & Environment Committee would respond.

**S&E**

**114.3** Invite to inaugural meeting of North Herts Association of Parish, Town and Community Councils Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March at Mrs Howard Hall Letchworth 7.30pm. It was agreed that Cllrs Macey and White would attend.

**MNW/BM**

#### 115. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE

##### 115.1 Decisions by NHDC as Planning Authority

###### 115.1.1 Application no.11/02901/1HH

52 Station Road, Ashwell for Dr W Fletcher

Remove the paint, repoint and render in lime mortar the front and side elevation of the house.

Standard Conditional Permission

###### 115.1.2 Application no. 11/02759/1HH

14 Newnham Way for Mr S Cunningham

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory.

Standard Conditional Permission

##### 115.2. Applications to NHDC as Planning Authority.

###### 115.2.1 Application no. 12/00030/1TCA

The Mill, Mill Street

Fell one Willow tree.

Ashwell Parish Council

Page 1 of 4

minutes february council 2012.doc

Chairman's  
signature

Date

### **115.3 Correspondence**

**115.3.1** Two emails from parishioners re recent building works at 42 High Street (dentists' surgery) expressing concerns re the visual appearance, including an air conditioning unit, and loss of parking. It was noted that the Parish Council Planning Committee had considered the application for a single storey extension at the rear in May 2010; no objections had been made. It was agreed to advise the parishioners to forward their concerns to the Planning Officer at NHDC; if the agreed plans had not been adhered to, this would be an enforcement issue. It was agreed that the Clerk also request the Planning Officer to investigate. **Clerk**

**115.3.2** (January Council, 104.2.1) HAPTC re countywide partnership with CPRE for planning training. It was noted that various dates and venues were being offered; the Chairman encouraged those interested to attend.

**115.4** Meeting with NHDC Planning Officers held on 25<sup>th</sup> January to discuss planning procedures and other issues.

**115.4.1** It was reported that notes from the meeting had been circulated; it was agreed that these be placed on the website. The planning officers had been thanked for their attendance and it was agreed that the meeting had been very useful. **Clerk**

**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**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Berry) Nothing further to report.

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mathews) Draft minutes meeting 16<sup>th</sup> January supplied; next meeting scheduled for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 to be rescheduled.

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Hoffman) Next meeting scheduled for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 to be rescheduled.

Cllr Hoffman reported a meeting with the landowner Mr Ashley Mack. Re Arbury Banks, he had been assured that proposals to remove the concrete 'sarcophagus' were to be progressed. Re the Quaker Burial Ground in Angell's Meadow, concerns had been reported.

### **119. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(Committee Chairman Cllr Long) Next meeting scheduled for Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

**119.1** Approval of February Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

### **120. REPORTS FROM WORKING PARTIES**

**120.1 Website Group** (Chairman Cllr Mathews) Cllr Mathews reported that he would supply the necessary software to the Clerk and Chairman that would enable them to upload the minutes of meetings onto the website. **DMM**

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

**120.2.1** Negotiations with NHDC re future of toilets at the pavilion. It was reported that NHDC had requested a further meeting. It was understood that they were keen to ensure the three parished areas involved (Ashwell, Knebworth and Royston Town) were treated similarly. It was agreed that Cllr Hoffman attend to reiterate the Parish Council's position. **MGH**

**120.3 Yearbook Group** (Chairman Cllr Long) Cllr Long reported that the 2012 edition was scheduled to arrive from the printer on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March. It was agreed that councillors and volunteers would ensure delivery to all households and businesses by Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March; the Clerk would distribute a schedule of delivery rounds. It was agreed that all would consider whether there were any matters whereby inclusion of a flier would be of benefit. **Clerk/ALL**

**120.4 Design Statement Review Group** (Chairman Cllr Long) Cllr Long reported that a meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**120.5 Community Housing Group** (Chairman Cllr Buxton) It was reported that a meeting with the CEO and new contact at Howard Cottage Housing Association had been requested. **Clerk**

**120.6 Jubilee 2012 Group** (Chairman Mrs Jill Powell). Nothing further to report.

**120.7 Olympics 2012 Group** (Chairman Mrs Margaret Budgen). Nothing further to report.

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

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

**121.1** Report from representatives of the PCC on proposals for the new rectory. The Chairman thanked the PCC representatives, Andrew Gillborn and John Rowlands, for their attendance. He wished it to be noted that no formal planning application 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. The PCC representatives reported briefly on the background to the current situation. For some years the PCC had known that the rectory in Hodwell, owned by the Diocese, would have to be sold if the Diocese found an alternative as the financing of it was not sustainable. A watch, by the Diocese, had been kept for suitable properties coming onto the market so that they could be recommended for purchase as a new home for the parish priest, but none had been found. Last year the PCC learnt that the Diocese was not willing to accept another winter's heating bills at the old rectory and that it proposed to purchase 109 High Street. The PCC had expressed its concern at the suitability of 109 High Street which, in their view, did not meet the criteria for a parish priest. However, the purchase of a new rectory and sale of the old had now been completed at the insistence of the Diocese and not the PCC.

Negotiations with the Diocese had continued and it had now been agreed to progress plans for a new, purpose-built rectory. A potential site in Gardiners Lane, between the Surgery and Wolverley House, had been identified and pre-application discussions held with the Planning Officer at NHDC. The proposed property would be a residence for the parish priest but would not include the church office; there were plans for accommodating the latter at a different location. The site in Gardiners Lane was outside the boundary of the village 'building line' and thus would only be given planning permission as an 'exception site'. Under statutory rules, for the NHDC Planning Authority to agree to an exception site, community benefit would have to be proven.

One reason for the PCC's presentation to the Parish Council at this stage was to gain its views on how the PCC might go about proving 'community benefit'.

Pre-application advice from the NHDC Planning Officer had also informed that an 'occupancy limitation' would be required, ie there would be a legally binding restriction on who could occupy the property; in this case the parish priest.

The following points were made by parish councillors

- The 'community benefit' required for an exception site would, in this case, have to be significant. The area, between the Surgery and Wolverley House, had previously been proposed as potentially suitable for social housing; some were of the view that a combined application for a new rectory and adjacent social housing should be considered.
- Given the key location of the proposed site within the conservation area, the design character of the building would have to be exceptionally high. It was noted that the rules for any development in a conservation area required that no harm should be done to the area and preferably that enhancement be achieved.

**121.2 Police matters** Cllr Macey reported that he PCSO Chris Braybrook would attend a meeting subject to his shift pattern.

**121.3 Village Hall** Cllr White reported that he would attend the next meeting scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**121.4** Cllr Schwick reported that she had received details for the 2012 Village of the Year competition. It was agreed that the cost and effort involved in presenting an entry could not be justified.

**Meeting closed at 9.25pm**

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

### **Items on the table**

1. North Herts District Council ‘Members Information’ w/e 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> January.
2. *The Clerk* January 2012 SLCC
3. HAPTC training course details
4. *Wildlife Matters* Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

### **By Email**

5. HAPTC Weekly Briefings.
6. *Rural News* from PC Marina