

Ashwell Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th March 2012 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm

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

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: None.

122. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

D Cook (family commitment), J Connolly (work commitment), G K Scott (work commitment),
C V Schwick (unwell).

123. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 1st February 2012

Cllr Hoffman requested an addition, to ensure clarity, to 121.1 (Report from representatives of the PCC on proposals for the new rectory). Last sentence of first paragraph, 'However, the purchase of a new rectory and sale of the old had now been completed', addition of 'at the insistence of the Diocese and not the PCC'.

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

124. CODE OF CONDUCT/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Item 131.2, Donation to Museum, Cllr Hoffman declared a prejudicial interest (Museum Trustee).

125. MATTERS OF REPORT

125.1 (February 113.1) Veolia consultation on Draft Drought Management Plan. It was reported that an operating agreement had been signed by the relevant bodies over the detail concerning the augmentation of flows at Ashwell Springs SSSI and these would be updated in the final drought plan.

125.2 (February 113.3) It was reported that further general information on insurance cover had been received from Came & Company Parish Council Insurers. It was noted that it had been agreed at Finance Committee that a meeting be arranged with the insurers to review cover.

125.3 (February 114.2) NHDC review of street cleansing. It was reported that a response had been sent and agreed that Streets & Environment Committee would progress anything further as necessary.

S&E

Item pending for April Council.

125.4 (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

126. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

126.1 Invitation to NHDC Members briefing session Thursday 8th March on consultation London Luton airport expansion proposals. Cllr Berry had agreed to attend.

MWB

126.2 Letter and follow-up emails from Parishioner Ian Simpson writing on behalf of the local Liberal Democrat Party re (i) safety at the War Memorial junction, (ii) parking. It was agreed that the contents be noted and a response sent to Mr Simpson and the Liberal Democrat leader at NHDC reiterating the Parish Council's position on both issues. Re (i) - from the evidence available, the view was that the changes carried out had made a significant difference, the issue being not about whether vehicles were able to cut the corner but whether the changes had reduced the risk of collisions. The Parish Council was willing to reconsider if further evidence could be provided. Re (ii), it was noted that input was welcomed but the options available were limited. Yellow lines would have to be policed if they were to be effective but neither the police nor NHDC was prepared to do this. Additional white lines had already been discussed with Herts Highways and proposals agreed were in hand.

Clerk

126.3 Copies of emails from Parishioner Dai Rowley-Jones to rights of way officer and County Councillor Tony Hunter re HCC resurfacing works to Ashwell Street byway; dissatisfaction had been expressed. Cllr Berry reported that a meeting with the officer was to be scheduled.

MWB

126.4 Email from HAPTC re the Localism Bill and eligibility to act under the new proposed 'competence' rule. This required (i) two-thirds elected members, (ii) a qualified clerk, (iii) clerk to

have completed the relevant training. Re (iii) HAPTC would be organising a training session as soon as the regulations were confirmed.

126.5 Letter and CD from HCC re Waste Development Framework consultation. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/wasteplanningconsultation; deadline 19th March.

126.6 Letter and brochure from NHDC 'Local Development Framework –Core Strategy New Housing Growth Targets consultation. Details available on www.north-herts.gov.uk; deadline 30th March. Cllr Long to respond. **WPL**

126.7 Email from HCC School Planning consultation on proposals for Da Vinci Studio School of Science and Engineering sponsored by North Hertfordshire College.

126.8 Email from Parishioner David Richards with concerns re litter on the verges specifically between Ashwell and Hinxworth, and on the road through Newnham towards Baldock. It was agreed that the Streets & Environment Committee discuss further, including the possibility of organising working parties. **S&E**

126.9 Letter from Parishioners William and Barbara Bray re the report to the February meeting of the Parish Council from representatives of the PCC on proposals for the new rectory. The letter expressed concerns that 'the PCC was apparently seeking and receiving advice or special pleading'. The letter also questioned, 'surely the Parish Council should be acting as a disinterested and independent body in this matter'. It was noted that the presentation by the PCC representatives, and subsequent discussion, had taken place during the 'open' part of the meeting when standing orders were suspended; this was standard practice in relation to other village bodies and village affairs. It was agreed that the suggestion that the Parish Council should be 'disinterested' was not appropriate. It was agreed that the Parish Council had, and would, act properly; it would not prejudice or predetermine and would remain unbiased in any decision. **Clerk**

127. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE

127.1 Decisions by NHDC as Planning Authority

127.1.1 Application no. 12/00030/1TCA. The Mill, Mill Street. Fell one Willow tree.
No objections.

127.1.2 Application no. 12/00019/1LB

2 Foresters Cottages 16 High Street. For Mrs J Aukland

Listed Building: Demolition of rear single storey extension and erection of new single storey rear extension with associated internal alterations (as variation to listed building consent dated 01 September 2011)

Conditional Listed Building Consent

127.2 Applications to NHDC as Planning Authority.

127.2.1 Application no. 12/00338/1TCA

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

Removal of one Ash tree.

127.3 Correspondence

127.3.1 Notification from Planning Officer of withdrawal.

Application no. 11/03117/1 and Application no. 11/03145/1CAC

35 High Street and Whitby Farm

For Logan Homes Ltd

Conservation Area: Demolition of farm buildings and rear extension and outbuilding to 35 High Street

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 5 dwellings comprising of 1 four bedroom detached house with detached double garage, 2 four bedroom detached houses with attached double car ports and 2 three bedroom dwellings with double car port and storage, following demolition of existing farm buildings. Access road to plots 1-4 (inc) and access to plot 5 from Silver Street. Associated boundary walls and fencing. Two storey rear extension and detached garage to 35 High Street following demolition of existing rear extension and outbuildings.

127.3.2 Copy of response from Anglian Water to NHDC Planning Officer re 35 High Street and Whitby Farm (see 127.3.1 above). 'The sewerage system at present has available capacity for these flows from this proposed development'. 'Anglian Water will continue to monitor the performance of

the existing foul water system and should the need arise the appropriate action will be taken to ensure that residents are not affected by increased flows’.

127.4 Meetings

Next committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday 4th April prior to April Council meeting

128. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

(Committee Chairman Cllr Berry) Nothing further to report. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday 29th March, 8pm.

129. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mathews)

Next meeting scheduled for Monday 19th March 2012.

129.1 Cllr Mathews reported that the Cemetery Landscaping Project was now complete. There were some minor issues to be addressed re the new seat. He proposed that a press release be issued; this would be discussed further at the next committee meeting.

129.2 Cllr Mathews reported that the Church clock refurbishment was now complete; the contractors had investigated the problem with the chimes and were to return to address this.

130. REPORT FROM CHARACTER AREAS COMMITTEE

(Committee Chairman Cllr Hoffman) Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday April 4th prior to Council and, if held, Planning Committee.

130.1 Cllr Hoffman reported that the concerns of local residents at the silting of the river by the Mill Street bridge had been passed to Natural England (as the authority with powers re the Springs SSSI) to enforce action by the Environment Agency (as the body responsible for the river). He expressed his frustration at having to deal through multiple agencies; the Parish Council would continue to press for action.

Clerk

131. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Committee Chairman Cllr Long) Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 18th April 2012.

131.1 Matters of report from committee meeting Monday 5th March.

131.1.1 The Chairman made the following proposals

(i) Review of effectiveness of internal audit controls (including risk assessment). The checklist used by the Internal Auditor to be noted. The financial management risk assessment programme to be noted.

(ii) Review of risk assessment; policy and procedure. To be noted that (a) an update of employees risk assessments had been carried out by the Chairman, forms completed and filed, (b) all contractors on Parish Council land were required to have all risk insurance and abide by the required operating procedures.

(iii) Review of insurance. To be noted that (a) the current insurance schedule included fidelity guarantee insurance of £100,000 and was in place prior to the receipt of the first precept instalment, (b) the insurance schedule was to be updated to include new equipment purchased, (c) the insurance schedule was to be updated to make necessary provision for the toilets at the pavilion, (d) a review of the cover for the Springs and the Cemetery, following recent works, was to be carried out.

It was **resolved** that the proposals be accepted.

Clerk

131.1.2 Audit arrangements for financial year ending 31st March 2012. It was agreed that documents for Internal and External Audit be prepared for review by the Finance Committee on 18th April; a proposal and Internal Auditor’s report to be made to the May Council meeting. It was noted that publication of the unaudited accounts in the annual report was required by 30th June.

Clerk

131.2 Approval of March Accounts and Bills for Payment (see 124 above for declaration of interest) It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid.

Clerk

132. REPORTS FROM WORKING PARTIES

132.1 Website Group (Chairman Cllr Mathews) Cllr Mathews reported that minor updates continued.

132.2 Quality Status Group (Chairman Cllr Hoffman)

132.2.1 Negotiations with NHDC re future of toilets at the pavilion. It was reported that, following a further meeting, two options had been proposed by John Robinson of NHDC. Both options would allow the Parish Council to be flexible re opening hours recognising ‘the Parish Council’s superior

local knowledge and understanding of the needs of the local residents'. It was agreed that a response be given in favour of the option with a sliding scale of funding support from NHDC with a commitment from the Parish Council to maintain public opening over five years with opening hours set by the Parish Council according to local needs. **Clerk/MGH**

132.3 Yearbook Group (Chairman Cllr Long) It was noted that the 2012 edition was currently being delivered to all households and businesses. It was noted that many positive comments had already been received.

132.4 Design Statement Review Group (Chairman Cllr Long) Cllr Long reported that a meeting had been held to discuss proposals; a meeting with Richard Tiffin, Area Planning Officer at NHDC, was now scheduled.

132.5 Community Housing Group (Chairman Cllr Buxton) It was reported that no response had been received to the request for a meeting with the CEO and new contact at Howard Cottage Housing Association. It was agreed they be informed that if no date could be set, the option of negotiations with other suppliers would be progressed. **Clerk**

133. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM

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

133.1 Publicity and arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday 21st March, 8pm at the school. It was noted that posters had been placed on village notice boards; the Yearbook was currently being delivered to all households and businesses.

133.2 Village Hall. Cllr White reported that he had attended a meeting of the users group. Items discussed included (i) The AGM would be held on 1st May. (ii) There would be a display at the At Home. (iii) The future management of the facility. It had been noted that several key volunteers had announced their intention to retire and it had been acknowledged that finding volunteers willing to give their time and expertise was increasingly difficult. A proposal had been made to ask whether the Parish Council might wish to discuss playing a more active role.

Following discussion it was agreed that a document be prepared setting out the reasons for considering a change and the pros and cons of various options. This would be distributed for parish councillors to consider the matter further and decide if they wished to formally debate the options.

133.3 Police matters Cllr Macey reported that the PCSO Chris Braybrook had sent his apologies. It was noted that there was a meeting of the Neighbourhood Watch group scheduled for Thursday 8th March. Two recent incidents were noted (i) the robbery from an elderly resident, (ii) deliberate scratching of a car in Back Street. The police had stressed that the robbery was a rare incident and was being investigated by detectives. A parishioner had reported concerns re builders parking on the yellow lines in Station Road; it was agreed to request that the PCSO investigate.

133.4 Museum Proposals for the Jubilee photographic project were noted.

133.5 Henry Colbron Trust Cllr Long reported that a visit from the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company, was being scheduled.

Item pending for April Council.

133.6 Village sign proposals.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Appendix 1 – General material received

Items on the table

1. North Herts District Council 'Members Information' w/e 3, 10, 17, 24 February.

2. *Clerks and Councils Direct* March 2012

By Email

3. HAPTC Weekly Briefings.

4. *Rural News* from PC Marina

5. Herts Police Authority newsletter

*Chairman's
signature*

Date