

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors Peter Long (Chairman), Mike Berry, Jane Buxton, Martin Hoffman, Bridget Macey, Mark White.

The Clerk was also in attendance.

Members of the public: One parishioner (re item 106.3). District Councillor Andrew Young.

**96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillors John Connolly (work commitment), David Cook (work commitment), Daniel Mathews (away on holiday), Christine Schwick (away on holiday).

**97. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

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

**98. MATTERS OF REPORT**

**98.1** (December Council 87.1) Review of Standing Orders. The Chairman proposed, in order that adequate time could be given to the review, that agreement of the new draft be deferred until the AGM in May. He reported that advice had been taken from appropriate officers at NHDC who were satisfied that the current arrangements were adequate and could continue in the interim. The proposal was agreed. **DMM**

**98.2** (December Council 87.2) Village sign proposal. Cllr Peter Long reported that the new sign had been produced. Cllr Christine Schwick was to put forward some proposals for a suitable occasion for its installation. **CVS**

**98.3** (December Council 87.3) HCC publications on road casualty, traffic and transport data. Cllr Mark White reported that the document contained a lot of statistics but 'none were surprising'. Car ownership, already above the national average in Hertfordshire, was predicted to increase. Speed compliance had been worse in the 30 and 40mph categories although somewhat better for those above. Accident data showed that cyclists and motorcyclists were the worst affected in terms of seriously injured and killed.

**98.4** (December Council 87.4) Parking problem in Dixies Close. Cllr Mark White reported that the vehicle that had been parking on the grass verge was no longer doing so.

**99. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**99.1** Copies of email correspondence from Parishioner Ruth Mansi to Headteacher Ashwell School requesting action to stop school coaches parking on the grass verge outside the rear entrance. It was alleged that this had caused unsightly damage and spread hazardous mud onto the footway. The Headteacher had responded informing that she had made a request to the coach company not to park on the verge.

**99.2** Copy of a letter from Parishioner Joan Ridley re the claim for injuries sustained in her fall due to the poorly maintained surface at the junction of Bear Lane and the High Street. See also 106.1 below.

**100. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE**

(Next meeting scheduled for Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January 9.00am)

**100.1 Notifications from NHDC as Planning Authority**

**100.1.1** Application no. 12/01650/1

Hillrise, 4 Claybush Road. For Mrs Joan Yates

Full Planning Permission: Replacement dwelling retaining existing garage and annexe.

Conditional permission.

**100.1.2** Application 12/02528/1NMA Jessamine House, 15 High Street. Reduce the height of the railings and change the post head detail (non-material amendment to application 10/00626/1 granted 08.06.2010).

Agreed.

**100.2 From NHDC for Parish Council's consideration**

**100.2.1** Application no. 12/02741/1TCA 1 Fordham Close. Remove one Norway Maple tree. Reduce one Norway Maple tree by 15% all over.

It was *resolved* that no objections be made.

**100.2.2** Application no. 12/02742/1TPO 62 Back Street. Reduce one Copper Beech tree by 25% all over.

It was *resolved* that no objections be made.

**100.2.3** Application no. 12/02740/1TCA Digswell Manor, 74 High Street. Remove one Robinia tree.

It was noted that the reason for requesting removal was that the tree required frequent pruning due to its proximity to the house and telephone wires. A view was expressed that the tree was of value to the street scene and should not be removed; others did not share this concern. The question was asked as to whether there was any intention by the applicant to plant a smaller tree as a replacement.

It was *resolved* that no objections be made.

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Chairman's signature Date
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**100.3** (December Council 89.3) Development at 35 High Street and Whitby Farm. It was noted that, as agreed, the NHDC Planning Officer had passed to the Parish Council for comment the proposals for the fulfilment of the conditions imposed. Not all of these had yet been received.

**100.4** (December Council 89.4 and Planning Committee 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012, 18.0) Application no. 12/02239/1HH and 12/02240/1LB. 6 Springhead. It was noted that the application had been withdrawn; no further information had been received.

**100.5** Land adjacent to 92 Ashwell Street (Planning Committee 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011 Application no. 11/02885/1 and for 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013 Application no. 12/02767/1). It was noted that a planning application for this site was an agenda item for the forthcoming Planning Committee meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January. It was noted that an outline application by North Herts Homes for a bungalow suitable for a disabled or elderly person had been recommended for approval by the Parish Council Planning Committee in December 2011. Local residents' objections had been over-ruled by the view that additional social housing of this nature would be of benefit to the community. The planning authority, NHDC, had subsequently granted outline planning permission to North Herts Homes. It was reported that since then the site had been placed on the open market by North Herts Homes and understood to have been sold to a private individual. Cllr Peter Long reported that he had reviewed the covenants imposed on the original transfer of the land to North Herts Homes. These included clauses preventing the sale of the land other than to a tenant under the 'right to buy' or for 'community benefit'. It was presumed that North Herts Homes considered that the cash profit from the sale of a site in Ashwell would be of 'community benefit' to the residents of the whole of North Hertfordshire and that this outweighed any local loss to the 'community benefit' of Ashwell. Parish Councillors were unanimous in their strong objection to this and wished it to be noted that whilst this action might be technically legal they felt it to be immoral.

It was **resolved** to write to the CEO of North Herts Homes, Kevin Thompson, expressing the Parish Council's disappointment at this action (copies to District Councillor Andrew Young and Area Planning Officer Richard Tiffin).

**Clerk**

**100.6** Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Cllr Peter Long reported that documents relating to this were now available via the NHDC website ([www.north-herts.gov.uk/news\\_display.htm?id=58048](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/news_display.htm?id=58048)). NHDC had announced that it would be undertaking a full public consultation on the housing numbers and possible sites; it was understood that the Parish Council would be included in this.

**100.7** Social housing. The Chairman reported that he had received an email from Origin Housing Association in connection with its proposals for a new development on land adjacent to Walkden's in Station Road. The proposals were welcomed in principle and it was agreed that representatives be invited to a Parish Council meeting to provide further information. It was noted that this would be subject to the usual pre-application restrictions. It was agreed that the need to refresh the Housing Needs Survey conducted in October 2008 would be considered.

**Clerk**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mike Berry)

(next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January)

**101.1** (December Council 88.6 and 90.5) Report on Highways Liaison Meeting. Cllr Mike Berry reported that the purpose of the meeting had been to provide information on the new procedures for maintenance and the new local rapid response teams. The meeting had, he felt, been somewhat dominated by those wishing to raise on-going concerns. It had been announced that 20mph speed limits were to be re-investigated and that this would be covered in detail at the next meeting. He had ensured that Ashwell had been placed on the list of villages for review. It was noted that the view of the Parish Council remained that 20mph limits were desirable although concerns existed over methods of enforcement and the detail of areas to be included.

**101.2** (December Council 95.4) Request for bollards outside Foresters Cottages in the High Street. Cllr Mike Berry reported that further information from Herts Highways was awaited; he was aware that there were some technical issues re the narrow width of the pavement at this point that needed to be overcome. (See also 106.1 below).

**101.3** (December Council 90.1) Footway Lighting/Herts Highways survey. Cllr Mike Berry reported that this had been agreed last month but was still awaited. Cllr Mark White agreed to progress a survey to facilitate the progress of outstanding concerns.

**MNW**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Daniel Mathews)

(Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013)

**102.1** Church clock chimes. It was reported that further correspondence from parishioners had been received. It was noted that it had been agreed to hold a public meeting on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January, 12 noon at the school. It was noted that the purpose of the meeting was as a consultation exercise. Currently the Parish Council had in hand objections from only seven households who reported disturbed sleep because of the night-time chimes; it was felt that this was insufficient evidence to support any change. The proposed public meeting would provide an opportunity for objectors to make their case. Having listened to the points made, the Parish Council would consider the matter again at its February meeting. It was noted that notice of the public meeting had been published in the January edition of the *Ashwell Village News*. Notices would also be placed on notice boards and the website. **Clerk**

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Martin Hoffman)

**103.1** Springs railings paint. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that concerns re signs of wear had been forwarded to the appropriate officer at the County Council who had progressed enquiries.

**103.2** Springs oil pollution. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that, following a request, officers from the Environment Agency had attended and positioned a boom across the water to help track the source, thought to be an old oil tank in a neighbouring property.

**103.3** Ash dieback disease. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he continued to be in contact with appropriate authorities and local expert Trevor James; there was nothing further to report at present

## **104. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**104.1** (December Council 93.1 and 93.2) Letter from NHDC with an invitation to a meeting re changes to the council tax base and the apportionment of central government grants to parish councils. The Chairman reported his intention to attend and report back. He was of the view that central government changes to the funding for residents in receipt of benefits should not affect parish precepts.

**104.2** Approval of January Accounts and Bills for Payment (see Appendix 2).

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

## **105. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**105.1 Website Group** Nothing to report.

**105.2 Yearbook Group** Cllr Peter Long reported that good progress was being made for the publication of the 2013 edition.

**105.3 Community Housing Group** See 100.7 above.

**105.4 Speeding Group** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the group would restart monitoring in February. He again expressed his frustration with the length of time that the various formalities took. It was noted that several parishioners had received caution letters from the police following monitoring by the group and had expressed surprise. It was reiterated that the objective of the group's activities was to act as a deterrent to excessive speed in the village.

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

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

**106.1** Police. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that, following her request, PCSO Chris Braybrook had installed Neighbourhood Watch signage at three of the entrance roads into the village. It was agreed that he be asked to put additional signs on the Morden's road. Cllr Macey also reported that, following a number of break-ins to sheds, police advice was to fit good locks or store goods elsewhere. It was noted that, following reports to the December Council meeting (December Council 95.4), local police were to be informed of the Parish Council's intention to use cctv to gain evidence of vehicles mounting the pavement in the High Street. **BM**

**106.2** Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman, as Chairman of the Museum Trustees, reported that plans for the new entrance hall were being progressed.

**106.3** Parishioner Joan Ridley reported that her claim for injuries sustained in her fall had been refused on the basis that the pothole was not of sufficient depth. As the repairs that Herts Highways had carried out to the area following her accident had not actually included the pothole over which she had tripped, she had since been able to photograph it with a scale rule *in situ*. On the basis of this she had challenged the refusal; this had been copied to County Councillor Tony Hunter and the elected member responsible for

Herts Highways Stuart Pile. The Chairman thanked her for her report and reiterated the Parish Council's offer of support should this be required.

**106.3** District Councillor Andrew Young reported his on-going concerns re the need for more budget cuts at district level; the grant settlement with central government had been even worse than feared. Suggestions as to where further savings could be made would all be considered. It was agreed that Cllr Martin Hoffman review the proposals that were made to NHDC officers by the Quality Status Group.

Cllr Young reported success with recycling in the district. It was felt that the fortnightly basis for rubbish collections was good and would be retained. Proposals for doorstep collection of plastics were being pursued although initial capital costs would have to be considered. Cllr Young reported that, despite his gloomy comments on the budget situation, he did have some discretionary funds available for small community groups and encouraged them to apply.

**Meeting closed at 9.05pm**

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

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

1. North Herts District Council ‘Members Information’ w/e 7, 14, 21, 28 December.

#### **By Email**

2. HAPTC Briefings and Bulletins.

3. *Rural News* from PC Marina.

4. Open letter from David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire.

‘If you want to have your say, contact details can be found at: [www.hertscommissioner.org](http://www.hertscommissioner.org) or you can find me on Twitter at @HertsPCC.’ (included positive comments re the community speedwatch programme)

<b>APPENDIX 2</b>								
<b>ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -January 2013</b>						Date	<b>2nd January 2013</b>	
Proposed by Cllr White		Seconded by Cllr Hoffman						
				£	£	£	£	
				Grants	Precept	Other	Total	
<b>Income</b>								
72	Santander interest a/c	bank interest				2.42	2.42	
73	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent December				68.75	68.75	
74	Ashwell Football Club	rent pavilion and rec 11/12 season				100.00	100.00	
75	Ashwell Football Club	rent pavilion and rec 12/13 season				150.00	150.00	
76	Hibbitt & Sons (Masonry) Ltd	memorial (Munday)				100.00	100.00	
77	E H Crouch	interment (Milligan)				880.00	880.00	
78	PJ and J Dellar	reservation (Dellar)				160.00	160.00	
79-81	various	yearbook adverts				200.00	200.00	
82	E H Crouch	interment (Bowditch)				400.00	400.00	
83	NHDC	payment in error (meant for PCC)				160.00	160.00	
<b>Total</b>					0.00	2,221.17	2,221.17	
				<u>Committees</u>				
<b>Expenses</b>			A&O	CA	S &E	R&F	VAT	Total
<b>By Direct Debit</b>								
166	Affinity Water	pavilion water (01/01/13)				60.69		60.69
167	Affinity Water	allotments water (01/01/13)				9.45		9.45
<b>By Cheque</b>								
168	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1069.44					1,069.44
169	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		48.65	155.73	48.65		253.03
170	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec				60.12		60.12
171	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Reve	280.60		63.20			343.80
172	Maydencroft Rural Ltd	works at cemetery (quote no1073)				960.00	192.00	1152.00
173	Maydencroft Rural Ltd	works at cemetery (quote no1265)				1950.00	390.00	2340.00
174	St Mary's Ashwell PCC	payment in error by NHD	160.00					160.00
<b>Total</b>			1,510.04	48.65	218.93	3,018.77	582.00	5,378.39
<b>Outstanding Accounts</b>								
		Yearbook 2012 adverts -misc					1,385.00	
<b>Total</b>								1,385.00
<b>Money at bank</b>			Date	28th December 2012				
		Current Account					35,890.97	
		Deposit Account					29,526.13	
<b>Total</b>								65,417.10
		Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after						400.00
		Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding						1252.53
		Total						64,564.57
		Total after paying this months cheques						59,186.18
		Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques						29,660.05