

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors Peter Long (Chairman), Mike Berry, John Connolly, Martin Hoffman, Bridget Macey. The Clerk was also in attendance.

Members of the public: Twenty-five parishioners including two St Mary's PCC representatives re 128.4; the majority re 122.3.

**118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillors Jane Buxton (unwell), David Cook (work commitment), Daniel Mathews (work commitment), Christine Schwick (unwell), Mark White (away on holiday).

**119. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

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

**120. MATTERS OF REPORT**

**120.1** (February Council 109.1) Village sign. It was noted that a report had been received from Cllr Christine Schwick. She had confirmed arrangements for a formal unveiling ceremony to coincide with Ashwell at Home on May 12<sup>th</sup>. **CVS**

**120.2** (February Council 110.1) Cutting of the 202 Taxibus service and changes to the 90/91 bus service. It was noted that a report had been received from Cllr Mathews. He reported that there had been further valuable input from parishioners; officers of the County Council had been challenged on several points. The outcome had been a revised timetable including restoration of some of the services to Royston. The County Council had warned that the situation would be reviewed after one year. Parishioners remained concerned that the reduced timetable did not fulfil their needs, eg inappropriate timetabling (a five minute or five hour stopover) to access shopping, banking services etc., no service for a child attending school in Royston. Parishioners were concerned that the reduced service would result in reduced usage with an inevitable outcome, ie service cuts. Although a response had been received on the usage figures the situation was still not entirely clear; passengers holding concessionary bus passes did not appear to be included, only those paying fares. It was agreed that the situation be closely monitored and accurate figures of usage, including all categories of passenger, be made available by the County Council. The Chairman proposed that various options, including the possibility of the Parish Council tendering for the contract, be considered later in the year although funding would be an issue. **DMM**

**120.3** (February Council 110.2) North Herts Association of Parish, Town and Community Councils meeting Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February. It was noted that draft minutes had been distributed; there were no significant outstanding issues.

**120.4** (February Council 110.3) 'Connected Counties' broadband campaign. Information had been received; more people had signed up but others were still needed ([www.superfastforherts.org](http://www.superfastforherts.org)).

**120.5** (February Council, 117.2) Further complaints re dog fouling. Cllr Martin Hoffman reiterated that positive views had been expressed since dog restrictions at the Springs had been imposed. It was noted that a report had been received from Cllr Christine Schwick. She reported that parishioners responses to recently installed temporary signage at known 'hot-spots' had been positive. She directed parishioners to the NHDC website that included good information on the legalities and penalties that could be imposed; also a reporting form for specific incidents. A leaflet was now available and it was agreed that supplies be obtained from NHDC for distribution. It was noted that, if sufficient evidence was obtained, the Parish Council would press for a prosecution and publicise it widely. A proposal was made that cctv be used to obtain this. It was noted that the police had no objections and it was agreed to progress this. **CVS**

**121. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**121.1** Burst water main. It was noted that numerous emails and copies of emails to various parties had been received. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that, from his personal experience, he was of the view that the response from the supplier had been good and the communications excellent despite multiple problems. It was agreed that there was no need for further action.

**121.2** Proposals for filming at various sites in Ashwell. It was noted that various emails had been received from a film company; these had been forwarded to other organisations as appropriate.

**121.3** Aircraft noise. It was noted that a letter had been received from Parishioner Lesley King with concerns re recent increases in overflying frequency and noise levels. She was also concerned re proposals for expansion of Luton Airport and the potential adverse effect on the village. She sought the views of the Parish Council and what action it proposed. Cllr Mike Berry reported his understanding that there had been no recent increase in traffic into Luton but in certain weather conditions overflying of the village was more of an issue and this also affected the way in which noise travelled (this was confirmed by a parishioner

present). It was noted that when similar concerns had been raised previously, a working group had been set-up to investigate and report back. It was agreed that this be repeated. **MWB**

**121.4 NHDC Code of Conduct Monitoring Officer.** It was noted that an email had been received informing that all parish councillors' declarations for the register were now on the NHDC website.

[http://www.north-](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/council_and_democracy/democracy/councillors__mps__meps/parish_councils.htm)

[herts.gov.uk/index/council\\_and\\_democracy/democracy/councillors\\_\\_mps\\_\\_meps/parish\\_councils.htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/council_and_democracy/democracy/councillors__mps__meps/parish_councils.htm)

**121.5 Social care and support project.** It was noted that an email had been received from the co-ordinator of an HCC sponsored project supporting local people to support other local people by setting up their own micro care and/or support service. The Parish Council had been requested to publicise this.

[www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/hcc/healthcomservices/stratplanconsult/commwell/support/](http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/hcc/healthcomservices/stratplanconsult/commwell/support/)

## **122. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE**

(next meeting scheduled for Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March, 9.00am)

### **122.1 Notifications from NHDC as Planning Authority**

#### **122.1.1 Application no. 12/01617/1**

Land at Broadchalke, 40 Kingsland Way. For Jasmine Box Ltd

Full Planning Permission: 3x 4-bed detached dwellings together with provision of detached double garage for plot 1 and detached car ports for plots 2, 3 and 40 Kingsland Way following demolition of existing garage/store barn; revised vehicular access from Ashwell Street.

Granted Conditional Permission.

**122.1.2 Application 13/00220/1TCA.** 35 High Street. For Mr T Gawthrop (Applicant M Fathers Tree Care). Reduction by maximum of 20% of 1 Mulberry tree to reduce height.

**122.2** (February Council 111.3) Land adjacent to 92 Ashwell Street/response from North Herts Homes. It was noted that statements had been retracted and clarified and apologies given re (i) allegation that the Parish Council had objected to the application when in fact it had voted in favour of a bungalow suitable for a disabled or elderly person, (ii) allegation re affordable/social housing being 'not welcome' in Ashwell; this had been in relation to the specific site not a general comment.

#### **122.3 NHDC consultation on Housing Options and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).**

It was noted that, since the NHDC press release in December 2012, parish councillors had attended briefing meetings and had taken the opportunity to review the various packages of information received. At the February Council meeting it had been resolved that

*'i) a notice be placed in Ashwell News encouraging parishioners to take part in the consultation process. ii) The Parish Council would form a collective view at its March meeting. iii) This view would be presented at the Parish Meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup> with a further request for individual parishioners to contribute to the consultation process.'*

It was noted that the consultation consisted of two parts (i) housing options for the next 20 years (2011-2031), and (ii) the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

It was noted that the housing options consultation included multiple questions covering the whole district. It was agreed that it should be responded to in its entirety.

(i) Housing/major strategic sites. The following responses were proposed:- North of Letchworth, east of Letchworth, north of Stevenage – no objections. Rush Green – support as a brownfield site. North-east of Stevenage – concern on the effect on Weston so to be placed at the bottom of list. West of Stevenage – support due to proximity to services and benefit if A1(M) widened.

It was agreed to respond as proposed.

#### (ii) Housing/Non-strategic sites.

- It was noted that a figure of 61 houses had been put forward for Ashwell as a target for growth over the 20 year period (2011-2031). It was noted that the rate of growth had actually been higher than this over the previous twenty years although the population had not increased.

- The Ashwell Parish Plan (published in 2007) had consulted on various issues including housing. It had identified a need for starter and retirement homes rather than larger family houses yet since then almost all new development had been of the latter and had failed to address the issue of the former. Of the 817 residences currently in the parish 237 were single occupancy with 378 assessed as Council Tax Band E or higher, ie 4/5 bedroom houses.

- The Housing Needs Survey had identified a need for affordable/social housing in the village and the Parish Council had been in discussion with Howard Cottage Housing Association for some time. Last

month it had listened to a pre-application presentation from Origin Housing Association for an extension to Walkdens and had, in principle, expressed a view in favour.

- With regard to specific locations in Ashwell, concern was expressed that some sites previously identified and others where planning permission had recently been granted, were not included on the map in the consultation. These should also be included when considering the total target figure. Sites included Whitby Farm (5 units), 40 Kingsland Way (3 units), Moules Yard (2 units), Ashwell Street (1 unit), 61 Station Road (20 units), Walkdens (16 units). The site of the old turkey farm adjacent to Sunnymead Orchard on Station Road had previously been considered as a brownfield site suitable for certain types of housing development.

- The Claybush Hill site proposed by the landowner had aroused particular interest from parishioners. A large number of letters and emails had been received objecting on the grounds of intrusiveness on the landscape and negative impact on infrastructure (school, sewerage and road capacity). A large number of parishioners also attended the meeting (see also 128.6 below). An anonymous leaflet had been delivered to multiple households, it was assumed by an interested parishioner (that parishioner later identified herself). Concern was expressed that the leaflet had contained inaccuracies and many had been under the impression that it was from the Parish Council. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his outrage at the problems the leaflet had caused; he felt that it had generated a negative view of the Parish Council and parish councillors. It was noted that the Claybush Hill site had a history of failed applications going back some thirty years. It was noted that these rejections had been based on various existing planning policy documents:-

(a) NHDC Landscape Character Assessment (latest 2011)/North Baldock Chalk Uplands  
[www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_projects-2/evidence\\_base/landscape\\_character\\_assessment.htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects-2/evidence_base/landscape_character_assessment.htm)

(b) NHDC District Local Plan  
[www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_projects-2/local\\_plan-3.htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects-2/local_plan-3.htm)

(c) Ashwell Village Design Statement/NHDC Supplementary Planning Guidance  
[www.ashwell.gov.uk](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk)

- It was noted that most of the non-Ashwell sites proposed would have little or no impact on the village. Only the Bygrave Road Baldock site had been identified as of concern -the road was felt to be inadequate for additional traffic.

It was agreed to respond that the Parish Council had no objections to a figure of 61 houses in Ashwell; it objected to the proposed site on Claybush Hill.

(iii) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It was noted that this would be a new charge on developers to be used to fund infrastructure and would come into effect once District Plans were approved. It would be collected as part of the planning approval process. Parish councils could claim a certain percentage if they had in place a Neighbourhood Plan that had been approved following a referendum.

- NHDC had proposed a figure of £120 per square metre of net additional floor space. A proposal was made that this should be higher as it was too low in relation to the planning gain. For Ashwell there should also be a differential to reflect the relatively higher property values and the greater number of amenities compared to other villages, eg a cemetery.

- A figure based on floor space gave developers an incentive to build larger houses not the starter or retirement homes that were needed. A figure based on acreage should be considered.

- It was noted that many parishioners had expressed concerns re the negative impact of development on infrastructure. The Chairman emphasized that the purpose of CIL was to fund improvements in infrastructure and without growth it was difficult to see where any funding would come from.

It was **resolved** that the Parish Council would listen to any further views put forward at the Annual Parish Meeting and, assuming there was no reason to reconsider, would subsequently respond to the consultation as agreed.

(iv) Neighbourhood Plan. It was reiterated that this was a requirement for the parish to benefit from CIL funding for infrastructure. It would need the support of parishioners via a referendum and would cost in the region of £4,000 to £5,000. The Chairman voiced his view that the Parish Council would need support in principle from the parish before embarking on this and would seek this at the Annual Parish Meeting.

It was agreed that a publicity leaflet be distributed.

**Clerk**

## **122.4 Other correspondence**

**122.4.1** Notification from South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Authority re amendment to planning application: Installation of five wind turbines, Land at Highfield Farm, west of Royston Road, Litlington. Deadline for comments 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013. Agreed no action required.

**122.4.2** Email from NHDC re new system for communication of application plans and documents to parish councils (hard copies no longer to be supplied). It was noted that the Clerk had attended a briefing/training session at NHDC. The new NHDC database with an email alert system would be beneficial but there were implications for the Planning Committee re the NHDC decision not to supply hard copies of plans. The Chairman reported that the matter had been discussed at the Finance Committee meeting. It had been proposed that applications be considered at full council meetings and site meetings be held only if (i) a parishioner had raised concerns or (ii) a parish councillor had requested. This was agreed. Cllr John Connolly agreed to organise paper copies of large-scale plans if required.

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Mike Berry)

**123.1** (February Council 112.1) Footway Lighting/Herts Highways survey. It was noted that a copy of a letter from Parishioner Fergus Moynihan to, and response from, County Councillor Tony Hunter had been received. It was noted that a response was still outstanding from Herts Highways.

**123.2** (February Council 112.2) NHDC Waste and recycling service for Sunnymead Orchard. Cllr Bridget Macey reported on meetings and correspondence. Whilst progress had been made there were still issues with residents having to move their bins long distances rather than to the perimeter of their properties. Solutions to problems were still being sought.

**123.3** (Streets & Environment Committee, 70.1) Chestnut tree on Carters Pond. It was agreed that monitoring continue as per expert advice.

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Daniel Mathews)

(see draft minutes meeting Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January; next meeting scheduled for Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March)

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

(Committee Chairman Cllr Martin Hoffman)

**125.1** The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that full copies of its approved Drought Management Plan documents had been received from Affinity Water. These included the Parish Council's response to consultation, the monitoring arrangements for the Springs and confirmation that no drought order would be sought because of the potential for adverse environmental impact.

**125.2** Springs tree works. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the next phase of works in accordance with the agreed management plan had been completed.

## **126. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**126.1** It was noted that draft minutes of the meeting Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March had been distributed. Since the meeting there had been further clarification from NHDC on section 106 funds.

**126.2** Audit arrangements for financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

**126.3** Proposals re (i) Statement of Review of Effectiveness; proposal for approval. 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) employees risk assessments had been carried out by the Chairman and were up-to-date, 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 the current insurance schedule included fidelity guarantee insurance of £100,000 and was in place prior to the receipt of the first precept instalment. To be noted that the insurance schedule and costs had been reviewed following the local parishes review by NHDC.

It was *resolved* that the above proposals be approved.

**WPL/Clerk**

**126.4** Approval of March Accounts and Bills for Payment. (see Appendix 2).

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

**Clerk**

## **127. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**127.1 Website Group** It was noted that Cllr Daniel Mathews and Cllr Christine Schwick had sent reports; content for the new site was being collated.

**127.2 Yearbook Group** It was noted that the 2013 edition had been published. Deliveries would be completed by Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March.

**127.3 Community Housing Group** See 122.3 above.

**127.4 Speeding Group** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that further dates for monitoring had been scheduled.

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

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

**128.1** Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March, 8pm at the school. It was noted that this had been publicised in the Yearbook, in the *Ashwell Village News*, on the website and on notice boards.

**128.2** Police. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that membership of Neighbourhood Watch in the village was quite low compared to other communities and in relation to the population; some publicity for further recruitment was planned. Information explaining the role of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel had been received; assistance was sought to help publicise the panel's meetings to members of the public. Cllr Macey reported that PC Paul Marina was to retire in August. It was agreed to consider ways of marking his valued contribution to the community.

**128.3** Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the AGM of the Trustees would take place on 14<sup>th</sup> March. Funding for the new entrance was being sought and Cllr Hoffman intended to make an application through the Parish Council for section 106 moneys currently held at District.

**128.4** Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr John Connolly reported that the representatives of the Trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company, would visit the village on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April. Publicity was to be arranged and youth groups contacted.

**128.5** Update on proposals for a new rectory by St Mary's PCC representatives.

(In accordance with agreed Code of Conduct procedures for matters involving parish organisations with which individual councillors might be involved, this item was included in a public session, ie Standing Orders suspended)

The Chairman 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.

It was noted that the PCC had presented information to the Parish Council in February 2011. Updated information had been sent to all parish councillors and had also been published in *Ashwell Village News*. Andrew Gillborn reported that as no suitable existing property had been identified, plans for a new building on the site between the doctor's surgery and Wolverley House had been progressed. This would include accommodation as per the diocesan guidelines for a home for a parish priest but not the Church office. The latter would be accommodated elsewhere. As the site was outside the village envelope, planning permission would only be granted as an 'exception site' for which community benefit would have to be proven. It was agreed that the advice remained the same ie,

- The 'community benefit' required for an exception site would, in this case, have to be significant.
- 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.

The area between the Surgery and Wolverley House had previously been proposed as potentially suitable for small affordable retirement residences or start up homes. Some were of the view that the Diocese might make a combined application.

Concern was expressed that failing such a proposal, the very considerable planning gain which would result from a successful application on this site would accrue to the Diocese rather than the community.

**128.6** Representations from parishioners present re item 122.3 above, NHDC consultation on Housing Options and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The views expressed were all consistent with written representations received. Objections of the majority were (i) adverse impact on already overstretched infrastructure (school, sewerage and road capacity) and (ii) detrimental to the landscape.

**Meeting closed at 9.50pm**

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

#### **Hard copy – 'Items on the table'**

**1.** North Herts District Council 'Members Information' w/e 1, 8, 15, 22 February.

#### **By Email**

**2.** HAPTC Briefings and Bulletins. **3.** *Rural News* from PC Marina.

	APPENDIX 2							
	ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -March 2013					Date	6th March 2013	
	Proposed by Cllr Hoffman	Seconded by Cllr Connolly						
					£	£	£	£
	Income				Grants	Precept	Other	Total
106	Santander interest a/c	bank interest					2.50	2.50
107	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent February					68.75	68.75
108-111	Various	memorial plaques					300.00	300.00
112	Geere & Pepper Memorials	memorial (Embury)					100.00	100.00
113-116	various	yearbook adverts					415.00	415.00
117	Ashwell PO	yearbok sales					144.00	144.00
118-121	various	yearbook adverts					405.00	405.00
	Total					0.00	1,435.25	1,435.25
					Committees			
	Expenses		A&O	CA	S & E	R&F	VAT	Total
	By Direct Debit							
188	NHDC (01/02/13)	streets waste			78.65			78.65
189	British Gas (05/01/13)	pavilion electricity (01/10/12 - 5/12/12)				32.01		32.01
190	E.ON (30/01/12)	pavilion electricity (06/12/12- 30/01/13)				72.56		72.56
191	British Telecom (18/02/13)	clerk's phone line and broad	111.68				22.33	134.01
192	Affinity Water (01/03/13)	cemetery water				15.00		15.00
	By Cheque							
193	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1069.44					1,069.44
194	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expen	59.09				9.42	68.51
195	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		38.92	124.74	38.92		202.58
196	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec				60.12		60.12
197	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	280.60		50.40			331.00
198	CDAHerts	membership subscription	30.00					30.00
199	Peter Weston	Chapel of Rest structural report				400.00		400.00
200	T&J Fire	annual fire inspection and maintenance				132.54	26.51	159.05
201	D J Granger	cemetery works as per contract				345.00	69.00	414.00
202	St Mary's Ashwell PCC	donation re Village News	125.00					125.00
203	K Clifford	Premises duties				30.00		30.00
204	The Liberty Corporation L	cleaning toilets 04/02 to 03/03				80.00	16.00	96.00
205	The Creative Haus	Yearbook printing	2474.50					2474.50
206	Ashwell Primary School	room hire 19 Jan	35.00					35.00
207	M Fathers	tree works at the Springs		970.00				970.00
208	M Barden	reimbursement			11.99			11.99
	Total		4,073.63	1,008.92	187.13	1,086.58	120.93	6,477.19
	Outstanding Accounts							
	Yearbook 2013 adverts -misc						2,000.00	
	Yearbook 2012 adverts -misc						910.00	
	Total							2,910.00
	Money at bank	Date	25th February 2013					
	Current Account						32,954.49	
	Deposit Account						29,531.14	
	Total							62,485.63
	Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after							184.00
	Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding							1281.53
	Total							61,388.10
	Total after paying this months cheques							54,910.91
	Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques							25,379.77