

Minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th May 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm

Present: Councillors Mike Berry, Jane Buxton, Martin Hoffman, Peter Long (Chairman for item 1), Bridget Macey, Mark White (Chairman from item 2).

Apologies: Councillors John Connolly, Daniel Mathews (work commitments).

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Twenty-three parishioners.

1. Election of Chairman Cllr Mark White was proposed, seconded and elected.

Cllr Martin Hoffman wished to record thanks to the previous chairman, Cllr Peter Long, for the dignity and professionalism with which he had carried out the role, often behind the scenes. The past year had been, because of the chimes issue, the most difficult he could ever remember for a parish council. Cllr Hoffman expressed his criticism of those who thrived on rumour and misinformation, and those who had selectively forgotten that the Parish Council had to make decisions that were within laws, rules and regulations. The verbal threats made and vicious emails sent to the chairman and his family and to others involved were totally unacceptable. He was minded to expose those responsible although doubted that those concerned would have the decency to be ashamed.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman Cllr Martin Hoffman was proposed, seconded and elected.

3. Code of Conduct

3.1 The Ashwell Parish Council Code of Conduct adopted 1st August 2012, the arrangements for the grant of dispensations, declarations of interests and the provisions for publicity. These were all noted and agreed with no amendments.

3.2 'Openness and transparency on personal interests: A guide for councillors' published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2013'. This was noted.

4. Proposal to adopt Standing Orders (version dated 2nd October 2013).

It was *resolved* to accept with no amendments.

5. Financial Regulations

5.1 Proposal to adopt (version dated 5th March 2008)

It was *resolved* to accept with no amendments.

5.2 Review of preferred suppliers It was noted that the previous supplier for tree work had moved away from the area. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a potential new supplier had been identified and a meeting was to be scheduled to ascertain their suitability, particularly with regard to works at the Springs.

Clerk/MGH

6. Appointments and nominations

6.1 Committee Members All members agreed to continue as previously (see below for membership details). It was noted that, where necessary, committee chairmen would be elected at the first meetings of the committees.

6.1.1 Recreation and Facilities Committee Cllrs Jane Buxton (Current Chairman), Peter Long, Daniel Mathews, Jane Smith. Carol Moore (Co-opted member for the Cemetery).

6.1.2 Streets and Environment Committee Cllrs Mike Berry (Current Chairman), John Connolly, Graham Lee, Bridget Macey and Mark White. Martin Lush (Co-opted member for Rights of Way).

6.1.3 Character Areas Committee Cllrs Martin Hoffman (Chairman), Jane Buxton, Bridget Macey. Martin Lush (Co-opted member).

6.1.4 Finance Committee (i) it was noted that this was comprised of committee chairmen and that the Internal Auditor also attended, (ii) the proposal that the leader of the Neighbourhood Plan working group continue to be a member was agreed.

6.1.5 Planning Committee All parish councillors members.

6.2 Parish Council Working Groups

6.2.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group It was agreed that Cllr Peter Long act as leader with Cllr Graham Lee in support.

6.2.2 Website Group It was agreed that Cllr Daniel Mathews continue as leader.

6.2.3 Yearbook Group It was agreed that Cllr Jane Smith act as leader; Cllr Peter Long agreed to assist with the handover.

6.2.4 Speed Watch Group It was agreed that Cllr Martin Hoffman continue as leader.

6.2.5 Community Housing Group It was agreed that Cllr John Connolly act as leader; Cllr Jane Buxton agreed to assist with the handover.

7.3 Appointments to other bodies and representatives for other bodies

7.3.1 Ashwell Village Trust The trustees were noted; Cllr Mark White (Parish Council Chairman and, in accordance with the Trust Deed, Chairman of the trustees), Cllr Jane Buxton (Parish Council Trustee), Mr Gordon Hill (Trustee and Hon Treasurer), Mrs Liz Moynihan (Trustee and Hon Secretary), Mrs Jane Porter (Trustee and, as Parish Clerk, Clerk to the trustees).

7.3.2 Moss Cottage Homes It was reported that Ms Madeleine Legg and Dr Rino Coladangelo would be pleased to be proposed as trustees and thus re-appointed. This was agreed.

7.3.3 Ashwell Museum It was agreed that Cllr Martin Hoffman continue as representative. (Noted that trustee of the Museum in his own right).

7.3.4 Ashwell School It was noted that Cllr John Connolly was currently the representative; Cllr Jane Smith was willing to take on the role if necessary. (Noted that currently no parish councillor on Governing Body).

7.3.5 Village Hall It was agreed that Cllr Mark White continue as representative.

7.3.6 Proposal for representative for Henry Colbron Trust and youth matters It was noted that Cllr John Connolly was currently the representative.

7.3.7 Police matters It was agreed that Cllr Bridget Macey continue as representative.

8. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 2nd April 2014

It was *resolved* that the minutes be approved and signed.

9. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)
Nothing to report.

10. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

10.1 Two letters from NHDC Electoral Services re statutory public notices for European Parliamentary Election May 22nd. It was noted that, as required, these had been placed on the notice board.

11. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

11.1 Consultations received (from NHDC as Planning Authority to Parish Council as consultee)

(If any objections are raised either by a parishioner or a parish councillor an on-site meeting of the Planning Committee is convened to consider those items; see notice board for agenda)

11.1.1 Case Ref No: 14/00974/1HH, 104 Station Road

Full Permission Householder: First floor front extension.

It was noted that the Parish Council was unaware of any objections from the public. There were no objections from parish councillors.

Response to NHDC: recommend acceptance.

11.1.2 Case Ref No: 14/00807/1TCA The Mill, Mill Street

Remove one Ash tree and one Hawthorn tree.

Response to NHDC: no objections raised.

11.2 Correspondence re planning matters. The following items were noted.

11.2.1 Notification from South Cambridgeshire District Council re application for Erection of agricultural fertilizer storage tank at Morden Grange Farm, Odsey.

11.2.2 Notification from Central Bedfordshire re consultation on Guidance Note 2: Solar Farm Developments in Central Bedfordshire . Details on www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning/consultation-and-news

11.2.3 Information from South Cambridgeshire re Submission of Local Plan to Secretary of State for Examination. Details on www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan

11.2.4 Information from Herts County Council re Waste Development Framework: Examination of the Waste site Allocations Document. Details on www.hertsdirect.org

12. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting 16th April available; next meeting scheduled for Monday 30th June)

Cllr Mike Berry reported that the following matters had been forwarded to the relevant authorities.

12.1 Footway Lighting/parishioners' concerns re new units installed by Herts Highways in Angell's Meadow and Woodforde Close. The Chairman reported that, as agreed, he was currently undertaking a further survey of all footway lighting in the village. The majority of units were now of white light and the swan-neck columns of the correct green colour.

12.2 Herts Highways/parishioner's concerns re new roadway layout adjacent development at 40 Kingsland Way.

12.3 NHDC waste and recycling service/parishioners' concerns re bins left on pavements.

12.4 NHDC street cleansing/problems with fly-tipping and frequency of litter bin emptying.

12.5 NHDC street cleansing/parishioners' concerns re efficiency of sweeping vehicle.

12.6 Fly-posting concerns. The Chairman reported his own, and parishioners', concerns that the increase in fly-posting, particularly on telegraph poles, was detrimental to the appearance of the village. He proposed that the current policy be reviewed to address this. It was noted that the current policy was to tolerate posters only if they were for local, charity groups and were removed promptly following an event. Following discussion it was agreed that (i) the definition of 'local' be clarified to mean the parish of Ashwell, (ii) a name with contact details be included on all material, (iii) this policy be advertised, (iv) parish councillors would continue to remove items that did not adhere to this policy.

The Chairman proposed that an additional community notice board in the vicinity of the bus-stop between the Post Office and the Springs be investigated. It was agreed that the Streets & Environment Committee consider this.

S&E

13. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting 24th March available; date of next meeting to be agreed)

13.1 Parish Clock.

13.1 Correspondence re the petition for a faculty. The following were noted (i) letter from the Diocesan Registrar dated 9th April acknowledging receipt of petition for faculty and informing of increase in petition fees, (ii) letter from the Diocesan Registrar dated 24th April informing that 'The Chancellor has directed that a faculty may be issued subject only to receipt from you of the revised fees...'

13.2 Cllr Peter Long reported that he had attended a meeting of the Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell group on 24th April. The meeting had also been attended by District Councillor Andrew Young and NHDC officer Andy Godman. Cllr Long had been given a copy of the legal advice provided to parishioners Mr and Mrs McBeal by Philip Kolvin QC, the barrister who had represented the successful party in the Cranfield case. This advice had been that the prospects for a successful legal challenge were low and the best course was for the Parish Council to take action to prevent the serving of a Noise Abatement Notice. If a notice was served this would have serious consequences and risk losing the night-time hourly strikes as well as the quarterly chimes. His recommendation had been that the proposal for a trial period seemed a sensible compromise and allow time for other options to be pursued.

Cllr Martin Hoffman wished it to be noted that this had always been the course of action proposed, albeit reluctantly, by the Parish Council.

13.3 Cllr Peter Long reported that two further items of correspondence had been received, one over the weekend and one this morning, (i) from Maria Brown, Chairperson Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell Committee, and (ii) from Guy Reed, a representative of the complainants. Both had requested the opportunity to address the meeting and had provided copies of their proposals in writing.

It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for members of the public to speak.

Guy Reed compromise proposal:-

1. The trial silencing period already proposed by the Parish Council goes ahead as soon as the Faculty is received. The overnight silencing is for 8 hours as stipulated by NHDC and WHO, and will be paid for by donors and impacted households.
2. During the trial silencing period the Save The Chimes group have at least six months, or as much time as they need:
 - a) to fund-raise
 - b) to develop their alternative technical solution to reduce the night-time noise of the bells and the chimes below the legal limits, but to keep them striking
 - c) to prove to all stakeholders that their solution works (and NHDC has offered to help them by offering their acoustic monitoring services)
 - d) and then to raise a new Faculty.
3. After these steps, their newly-proven solution can be implemented.
 - the bells and chimes will be compliant with the law at night
 - those households impacted by the bells and chimes will be able to sleep properly
 - and the chimes will have been saved overnight.

Maria Brown compromise proposal:-

Many months ago when this issue was first raised and solutions discussed, one of the options looked into was muffling or dampening the chimes to bring the volume level down to, or just under the prescribed limit. However, this proposed solution was rejected as it would mean that the chimes

were muffled 24 hours a day which might have made them almost inaudible during the day. At first certain people were unwilling to consider or accept a compromise for reasons made known to the Parish Council; however, since Andy Godman's advice at the meeting where many points were made absolutely clear, it seems to have finally been accepted that there is no way whatsoever to retain the chimes exactly as they are; therefore the only way to save the quarterly chimes is to find a way to reduce the volume of them to a level that would not be classed as a noise nuisance or prejudicial to health by Environmental officers and the regulator.

Therefore we have approached a mechanical engineer called Wayne Francis, a fabricator, welder, clockmaker and bellringer who is a former Ashwell resident and highly experienced in restoring and maintaining church clocks and bells, and also with installing sound/acoustic dampening mechanisms to church bells.

He has written to us detailing exactly what the volume reduction alteration will entail and what the cost will be. I would also like to tell you that Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell have discussed donating funds raised so far towards the cost of this work if the parish council do not have the funds available in full; however this offer only stands if the money is used to pay Wayne Francis to carry out the work he describes and the result is that the quarterly chimes sound at a volume level deemed by Andy Godman to be acceptable, therefore resulting in the quarterly chimes being retained 24 hours a day although quieter between 11pm and 7am.

The view was expressed by a parishioner that both parties involved should be applauded for accepting compromise.

Maria Brown presented her apologies as chairperson of the Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell group for the unacceptable comments that had been made to members of the Parish Council and the AshwellAdvocates.

Views were expressed by some that the installation of the timing device to silence the overnight quarterly chimes for a trial period should be put on hold and the installation of the technical solution proposed by the Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell group be progressed instead. There were concerns that if both options were progressed there would be two sets of costs; it was not clear whether the same timing device could be part of both options. It was reiterated that neither option was in any case to be funded by public money, ie by the Parish Council. It was also reiterated that the Parish Council needed to progress the installation of the timing device and the trial period to hold off the serving of a Noise Abatement Notice.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

It was noted that the quotes currently in hand from suppliers for the timer installation and electrical works were now out of date and agreed that these should be refreshed.

Clerk

It was noted that confusion existed as to whether a new faculty or a variation would be required to install the technical solution proposed by the Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell group and agreed that the Diocese be contacted to confirm the situation.

Clerk

Cllr Graham Lee expressed his concerns at the adequacy of the sound recordings taken by NHDC; whether sufficient numbers of properties had been monitored and, if the rumour that one property had installed double glazing were true, was there a need for new readings. It was noted that alternative solutions, including double glazing, could be investigated during the trial period.

Cllr Peter Long, despite his personal reluctance but to continue to avoid the serving of an abatement notice, proposed (i) as soon as the faculty was in place and the funding promised by the AshwellAdvocates received, the installation of the timing device be progressed and set to silence the quarter chimes for the eight hour period proposed by NHDC, (ii) at the same time during the trial period support for other options, including the technical solution proposed by the Save the Church Chimes of Ashwell group, to continue.

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

Clerk

13.2 Correspondence re pavilion. It was noted that a late item had been received. It was agreed that the Recreation & Facilities Committee consider and respond.

R&F

14. REPORT FROM CHARACTER AREAS COMMITTEE

(Committee Chairman Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

15. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting 28th April available; date of next meeting to be agreed)

15.1 Report and proposals from meeting Monday 28th April.

15.1.1 Proposal for clerk's pension scheme and amendments to the clerk's contract of employment.

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

MNW

15.1.2 Proposals re Audit 2013-14 (i) to approve, subject to a satisfactory report from the Internal Auditor, the Annual Return including Accounting Statements and Governance Statement, (ii) to note the public notice period from 2nd to 27th June and subsequent submission to the External Auditor for audit date of 30th June, (iii) to publish the annual report including the unaudited statement of accounts on the notice board and website by 30th June and the audited statement of accounts by 30th September.

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

Clerk

15.1.3 Review of risk assessments and insurance. These were noted.

15.1.4 Review of Training/Skills Audit. This was noted.

15.2 May Accounts and Bills for Payment. Re item 31 (payment of £240 to the Bishop of St Albans' Registry re faculty petition fee). Concern was expressed that, contrary to what had previously been agreed, this payment was being proposed for approval prior to the receipt of funding promised by the complainants group if their conditions were met. Following discussion it was proposed, in the light of statements heard and agreements now made (see 13.3 above), to approve the payment on the grounds that withholding it would delay progress with the faculty (the grant of the faculty understood to be pending only receipt of the fee) and could be considered by some as unreasonably petty.

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

It was **resolved** that the May Accounts and Bills for Payment be approved and paid (see appendix).

Clerk

16. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

16.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group. Cllr Peter Long reported that the District Council's difficulties having been noted and a way forward agreed for Ashwell, this would now be progressed.

16.2 Website Group. Nothing to report.

16.3 Yearbook Group. It was agreed that a handover meeting be arranged.

WPL/JS/ Clerk

16.4 Speed Watch Group. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that proposals for the purchase of equipment were being progressed and a demonstration of the equipment was scheduled.

16.5 Community Housing Group. Nothing to report.

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

17.1 Police matters. Changes to local police personnel were queried; it was agreed to invite the area Sergeant to a Parish Council meeting to clarify the situation.

It was noted that the following items of correspondence had been received.

17.1.1 Press release dated 9th April re Herts Police and Crime Panel: meeting to review the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed appointment of his Chief Financial Officer to be held on Thursday 24th April 2014. Details on www.hertspcp.org.uk

17.1.2 Email from Herts Constabulary acknowledging receipt of application to join the new Parish Watch system.

17.1.3 Invitation from David Lloyd, Herts Police and Crime Commissioner, to Annual Lecture Monday 16th June 18.00 for 18.30 at The Weston Auditorium, University of Hertfordshire.

17.2 Items raised by parishioners.

17.2.1 Parishioner Sarah Talks reported that the At Home would take place this coming Sunday (11th May); further offers of help would be appreciated.

17.2.2 Parishioner Fergus Moynihan expressed his concern that Herts Highways had not yet cut the verges in the area of Northfields Road this season; he was of the view that growth obstructed sightlines and was a traffic hazard. It was agreed that Herts Highways be contacted with a request that this be scheduled as soon as possible.

Clerk

17.2.3 It was reported that concerns had been received from parishioners that a hose pipe that crossed the pavement outside a house in West End was a trip hazard for pedestrians. It was understood that the pipe had been installed to address a drainage issue in the basement. It was agreed to write to the resident requesting action. It was suggested that if this was only a temporary matter a 'walk-over' mat could be used to make it safer; if the drainage pipe was needed on a long-term basis a more permanent solution was necessary. Contact details for Hertfordshire County Council's Highways department as the relevant authority would be supplied.

Clerk

Meeting closed at 9.12 pm

Items forwarded by email

- ## Appendix 2

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Signature.....Date.....