

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 6th August 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Mike Berry, Jane Buxton, Graham Lee, Peter Long, Bridget Macey, Daniel Mathews.

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Five.

39. APOLOGIES Cllr Martin Hoffman (earlier, long-standing commitment), John Connolly (family commitment).

40. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 2nd July 2014

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

(See also *in camera* items at 2nd July and 6th August meetings)

41. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Items not covered elsewhere)

41.1 (July Council 30.1) Parish clock.

41.1.1 Item noted; the letter received from NHDC Head of Housing and Public Protection re the commencement of the trial whereby the quarterly chimes are suspended overnight and his advice to the Parish Council to consider further action re the hourly strikes.

41.1.2 Item noted; correspondence with the Diocese and Wayne Francis of Clockwise Restorations re the proposed volume reducing device. It was reported that (i) a response from the Diocese as to whether a variation of the existing faculty or a new application would be required was still awaited, (ii) a quotation had been requested from Wayne Francis of Clockwise Restorations for the device to control the volume of the quarterly chimes. It was agreed that further discussion re the funding for the proposed device would take place once the quotation was received.

41.2 (July Council 31.1) Resignation. Item noted; the *in camera* meeting held, on the grounds that there was potentially a legal matter involved, in response to the resignation of a parish councillor precipitated by offensive comments on a Facebook site. The Chairman proposed that a further *in camera* meeting be held (i) to consider release of the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July, (ii) to consider the matter further. This was agreed.

41.3 (July Council 31.2) Vacancy. Item noted; the letter received from NHDC Electoral Services to confirm (i) no request had been received for an election by ten electors, (ii) the necessary statutory procedure that should be followed for co-option to fill the casual vacancy resulting from the recent resignation.

It was noted that, in addition to the current vacancy, there were still two unfilled positions dating from 2011 and 2012. It was proposed that this would be an opportunity to fill all three places. As there had now been three applications for the one current vacancy, it was evident that interest now existed. It was agreed that the three vacancies should be advertised as widely as possible through the minutes, website, personal contacts, notice boards, posters elsewhere in the village, and the *Ashwell Village News*. As the latter was agreed to be a significant conduit for communication, it was agreed that the matter be considered at the October Council meeting. This would allow time for publicity to be read in the September edition and would also avoid the holiday period. It was agreed that candidates be asked to apply in writing with a short statement of who they were and what they felt they could bring to the Parish Council. They should also be asked to indicate whether they would stand in the May 2015 election. **Clerk**

41.4 Concerns re recent press coverage and to agree a policy on media relations. Cllr Jane Buxton reported that she had been offended by recent press coverage of the Walkdens' extension planning application where a statement made by another councillor had been published rather than anything from her. Following discussion it was agreed that all press enquiries would, in the first instance, be directed to the Chairman who would refer them to the appropriate parish councillor.

42. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

42.1 Complaints re noise from the Farr Festival in Newnham on the weekend of 18/19th July. It was noted that several parishioners had made complaints direct to the environmental health department at NHDC. It was agreed that any other concerns should also be forwarded to NHDC as the responsible authority.

42.2 HCC consultation on review of county council funded bus services. Online at www.hertsdirect.org/busconsult. Deadline 8th October 2014.

It was *resolved* to suspend Standing Orders for a member of the public to contribute

Parishioner Joan Ridley reported that she had submitted an item to the *Ashwell Village News* encouraging parishioners to respond. The input of parishioners on such matters was again applauded.

Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that he had produced a flyer advertising the consultation and would distribute this to bus users, particularly of the taxibus service.

42.3 Minutes of North Herts APTCC 9th July including proposals for the annual conference organised by NHDC in October. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had attended; items of particular note included the annual report from Groundworks, the ward lunches and the proposal to invite the police commissioner, David Lloyd, to report on rural policing during his first year in office.

42.4 Request from the Chairman of Steeple Morden Parish Council for support in their campaign for safety improvements at the A505 Odsey junction. It was agreed to respond that the Parish Council was supportive in principle. Cllr Mike Berry proposed that a representative of Steeple Morden join him in attending the next North Herts Highways Liaison meeting scheduled for October; this was agreed. **MWB**

43. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

43.1 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 or contact the Clerk for agendas)

43.1.1 Case Ref No: 14/00995/1HH 37 West End

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear orangery infill extension.

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

Agreed response to NHDC: recommend acceptance. **Clerk**

43.1.2 Case Ref No: 14/01806/1 Ashridge Farm, Ashwell Street for Caravan Club.

Full Planning Permission: Installation of a further 4 all-weather caravan pitches to be used throughout the year.

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

Agreed response to NHDC: recommend acceptance. **Clerk**

43.1.3 Case Ref No: 14/01941/1 Land Adjacent To Ashridge Farm, Ashwell Street for Tingdene Developments Ltd.

Outline Planning Permission: Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) comprising the proposed development of up to 17 dwelling houses and a Multi-Use Games Area with associated access off Green Lane and egress via Station Road.

It was proposed that this be considered by the Planning Committee on Sunday 7th September, 9.00am; this was agreed. **Clerk**

43.2 Correspondence re miscellaneous planning matters

43.2.1 Notification from HCC re consultation on application for Erection of kiosk at Ashwell Water Recycling Centre off Common Lane. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/planning

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

43.2.2 NHDC decision notice re Case Ref No: 14/00599/1 Land East of 35, Ashwell Street

Outline Planning Permission: Erection of 1 detached dwelling with detached garage (all matters reserved).

NHDC decision: Permission refused. It was noted that the Parish Council had recommended refusal.

43.2.3 NHDC decision notice re Case Ref No: 14/00969/1

Land South Of St Marys Church To Rear Of 28 High Street, Hodwell

Full Planning Permission: Single storey front extension, single storey rear extension and external alterations to facilitate conversion of garage block to one 4 bedroom dwelling. Detached double garage with ancillary accommodation.

NHDC decision: Permission granted. It was noted that the Parish Council had recommended refusal.

43.2.4 Letter from NHDC in response to Parish Council's objections to an application re works to trees in the Conservation Area.

Case Ref 14/01511/1TCAThe Old Rectory, Hodwell

Pollard Lime tree (T1) back to original pollard points, fell Beech tree (T2), reduce Sycamore tree (T3) by 30% and fell Ash tree (T4).

NHDC decision: ‘...in this instance the trees are not considered worthy of the future protection afforded by a Tree Preservation Order and no objections have been raised to the works as requested’. It was noted that the Parish Council had raised objections. It was also noted that the landowner, Mrs Olivia Hall, had attended the Parish Council Planning Committee meeting and had verbally agreed to consider its concerns, in particular the request to delay any works that might disturb the Barn Owl roost.

43.2.5 Copies of emails from a parishioner to the land agent and police raising his concerns re security, and health & safety, at the development site, 61 Station Road. Cllr Bridget Macey had ensured local police officers were aware and requested their attention; they had confirmed that increased patrols were being made. She had also thanked the parishioner for his vigilance. The NHDC Planning Officer had been contacted and was understood to have also requested urgent action by the developer to install adequate fencing to the site.

43.3 Land adjacent Walkdens. Case ref no: 14/00336/1 For Origin Housing.

Items noted; re NHDC Planning Control Committee 14th July (i) report from Planning Officer with recommendation to committee that permission be granted, (ii) presentation to meeting by Cllr Jane Buxton on behalf of Parish Council objecting to the application, (iii) decision by the committee that permission be granted, (iii) draft minutes of meeting available on www.north-herts.gov.uk.

Item noted; email from Jill Grundy of Origin Housing, ‘I appreciate that the Parish Council objected to our application, but going forward we do want to work with you to ensure that you and local residents are kept informed and engaged with progress on the new site and would like to discuss the best way to achieve this. We want to develop a scheme that benefits Ashwell and one that the community will be proud of.’

Cllr Jane Buxton expressed her view that the Parish Council had been badly let down by NHDC with regard to both this application and others. She intended to ensure that every condition was strictly adhered to. Cllr Peter Long wished it to be noted that various failings by NHDC and central government following the Localism Act, particularly with regard to local plans, were a major concern. The next meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan group would discuss this further.

43.4 Pre-application information for proposed development at Sunnymead Farm, Station Road. It was noted that the agent was unable to attend the meeting in person because of a holiday commitment; documents had been supplied.

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 poor state of the site, an abandoned and neglected former turkey farm, had been of concern, particularly to neighbours, for many years. It was noted that the Parish Council had been consulted on several different applications for this site in the past; concerns had been that the proposed housing had been too dense and adversely impacted on neighbours at Sunnymead Orchard. Individual parish councillors expressed the following views (i) this proposal for only six houses was less dense and did not overlook neighbours, (ii) the proposed design/appearance could be more in keeping with a rural area, (iii) safety aspects of the access should be carefully considered. It was agreed that the school and the path to the station should be items for section 106 consideration. It was agreed that any application should be considered at an on-site meeting of the Planning Committee; local residents would be invited to attend.

Clerk

44. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (Chairman Mike Berry)
(draft minutes of meeting 30th June available; next meeting scheduled for Monday 8th September)

44.1 Herts Highways. Item noted; support for parishioners’ concerns re new lighting in Woodforde Close and Angells Meadow.

44.2 Herts Highways. Cllr Mike Berry reported that he had again brought to their attention the urgent need to empty the gravel trap at the foot of Partridge Hill.

45. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE (Chairman Daniel Mathews)
(draft minutes of meeting 4th August available; date of next meeting Monday 29th September)

45.1 Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that a proposal had been discussed for various archived documents held by the Parish Council to be offered to the Museum (see R&F minute 26). He sought views on whether these should be offered for custody or as a donation. It was noted that there was no statutory requirement for them to be held by the Parish Council and agreed that they be offered to the Museum on a donated basis.

MGH/Clerk

46. REPORT FROM CHARACTER AREAS COMMITTEE (Chairman Martin Hoffman)

46.1 Churchyard. The Chairman reported on behalf of Cllr Martin Hoffman. A request had been received from representatives of the St Mary's PCC for a contribution towards the cost of proposed tree work in the Churchyard. It was agreed that 50% of the cost, ie £500, be offered. **Clerk**

47. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

47.1 Approval of August Accounts and Bills for Payment. It was noted that the £2,000 owing from NHDC since May for the public toilets at the Recreation Ground was still outstanding. Information requested had been provided. It was agreed to inform NHDC that should the money not be paid by the end of the month the toilets would be closed and the reason publicised. **Clerk**

It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid (see appendix). **Clerk**

48. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

48.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Peter Long) See 43.3 above.

48.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Daniel Mathews) Nothing to report.

48.3 Yearbook Group. It was reported that there had been several new recruits. It was agreed that the group leader would not necessarily have to be a parish councillor. **MNW**

48.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

48.5 Community Housing Group (leader Cllr Jane Buxton) Cllr Jane Buxton reported ongoing issues with Origin Housing at Walkdens with repairs, the recent introduction of parking permits and blocked drains all causing concern.

48.6 Church clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had approached six individuals to join the group; four had already responded positively and two were pending.

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

49.1 Items raised by parish councillors.

49.1.1 Police matters; see 43.2.5 above.

49.1.2 The Museum; see 45.1 above.

49.1.3 Cllr Peter Long expressed his concern at the recent mailing sent to all electors re changes to the electoral register; inclusion in the public register was now the default. He encouraged all to apply to have their names removed from the public version that he considered was widely abused for marketing purposes.

49.1.4 Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had recently become aware of new rules applied by North Herts Homes for applications to become a resident of Wolverley House. Home owners, for example, were now excluded. It was agreed that District Councillor Andrew Young be asked for clarification. **Clerk**

49.2 Items raised by parishioners.

It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for this item

49.2.1 Parishioner Madeleine Legg reported her concerns re overflowing litter bins. It was noted that emptying was the responsibility of NHDC and undertaken by their contractor, Veolia, every 4 weeks. The Parish Council had for some time regularly raised concerns about the efficiency and adequacy of the service provided. The amount of waste had increased considerably since the commencement of the new recycling arrangements; residents frequently deposited bags of rubbish that had either been rejected by the NHDC contractor or was beyond the capacity of their purple bins. All were in agreement that the placing of dog waste in these bins was unacceptable. It was agreed that the Streets & Environment committee discuss the problems further. **S&E**

49.2.2 Parishioner David Sims wished to note his thanks to Cllr Jane Buxton for her efforts in support of local residents re the planning application for an extension to Walkdens. Also to Cllr Bridget Macey for all her hard work.

49.2.3 Parishioner David Sims requested information on whether all available brownfield sites were considered for new housing. Cllr Peter Long responded that Sunnymead Farm was one example (see 43.2.6). He was also aware that the Cooke Engineering site might become available.

Meeting closed at 9.30 pm

