

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

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

**62. APOLOGIES** Cllrs John Connolly (away on business), Mike Berry (other commitment).

**63. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014** Proposal for approval and signature.

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

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

**64.1** (September Council, 51.1 and August *in camera* item 3) To receive a public apology for offensive comments made on Facebook ('The Parish Council understands that, following an interview with the police, Mr Martin McBeal agreed to make a public apology to the Parish Council.')

Standing Orders suspended

The Chairman invited Mr Martin McBeal to speak so, as was understood had been agreed, he could make a public apology for the offensive comments he had made and that had resulted in the resignation of a parish councillor. Mr McBeal questioned the detail of the proposed apology, in particular who he was being asked to apologise to and where he was alleged to have made certain remarks. The Chairman reiterated the details that had been reported to previous meetings and forwarded to Mr McBeal. The Chairman then reiterated his request for Mr McBeal to make the agreed apology. Mr McBeal declined to do so and was asked to stand down from the meeting by the Chairman.

Standing orders were reinstated

(Mr McBeal subsequently left the meeting)

**64.2** (September Council, 52.2) Three councillor vacancies to be filled by co-option. The Chairman outlined the procedure to be followed for the co-option voting. He noted that guidance for this had been provided by the Democratic Services Manager at NHDC and that this had been forwarded to all parish councillors, and the five candidates standing, prior to the meeting. Parish councillors present and voting would have up to three votes each, the vote would be conducted by secret ballot, counting would be undertaken by the Chairman and the Clerk in the public meeting. It was agreed that, as was understood to be the procedure in full elections, candidates would take up office four days after the election and after they had signed declarations of acceptance and agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct.

The Chairman announced the results (numbers of votes in brackets): - Ms Madeleine Legg (7), Mr Martin McBeal (0), Mr Mike Pearch (2), Mr David Short (5), Mr David Sims (6).

**64.3** (September Council, 52.1) Parish Clock. It was reported that requests to the Diocese for information re the permission required to install the volume reducing device, despite reiteration, had still not been responded to. It was still unclear as to whether a new faculty or just a variation of the existing was needed. Concern was expressed that the period agreed for the trial was passing by and there had still been no progress with the volume reducing proposal. It was reported that Wayne Francis of Clock Restorations was now compiling information, in particular prices for components, to supply a detailed quote and noted that this had been on hold up until this point pending information from the Diocese. Cllr Peter Long expressed several concerns and requested that various aspects be investigated, (i) the status of the funding from the 'Save the Chimes' group, (ii) recent changes in night-time noise levels, eg overflying aircraft, (iii) possible engineering measures in the Church tower, eg orientation of the louvres to direct sound away from the Mill Street properties, to be used in conjunction with the volume reducing mechanism. Other councillors expressed concerns that the Parish Council should not change its position at this stage.

It was agreed to request that (i) the Internal Auditor investigate the potential funding from the 'Save the Chimes' group to determine there were no encumbrances to its accessibility by the Parish Council, (ii) the PCC and an appropriate expert be requested to give an opinion on the effectiveness of re-orientating the louvres to deflect sound away from the properties in Mill Street.

**Clerk**

**64.4** (September Council, 52.3) HCC consultation on review of county council funded bus services. Online at [www.hertsdirect.org/busconsult](http://www.hertsdirect.org/busconsult). Deadline 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014. Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that he had drafted a detailed letter in response and circulated this to parish councillors for their comments. The letter was commended and it was agreed that in addition to responding to the consultation it be sent to County Councillor Tony Hunter with copies to District Councillor Andrew Young and Oliver Heald MP. Prior to the HCC Cabinet meeting in November it would also be sent to appropriate members and the press. Cllr

Mathews reported that an agenda item on the consultation had been added to the North Herts Highways Liaison meeting scheduled for Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October; he would liaise with Cllr Mike Berry re attendance.

**DMM/Clerk**

(From item 72.2) Parishioner Joan Ridley reported that she had attended the recent meeting in Stevenage organised by HCC. HCC's representatives had reiterated the need for cuts to services to make budget savings. She had again made the case that the Ashwell route under threat was very well used and provided an essential and very worthwhile service. Ms Ridley was again commended for her valued input. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed the view that there was a need for joined up thinking on route planning; all were in agreement.

## **65. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda. See appendix for general items)

### **65.1** Letter on behalf of Giving Time project team re Parish Councillor Recruitment Project 2015.

It was agreed that this be monitored.

**65.2** From Central Bedfordshire Council. Notification of withdrawal of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, '...the Inspector raised numerous issues about the Plan and asked for a considerable amount of additional work to be undertaken in advance of the Examination hearings.'

It was agreed that this be monitored.

## **66. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **66.1 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 Clerk for agenda)*

#### **66.1.1** Case Ref No: 14/02070/1 Westbury Farm House, West End.

Full: Single storey extension to existing garage and workshop building.

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**

#### **66.1.2** Case Ref No: 14/02317/1HH 3 Broadchalke Close.

Full Permission Householder: Erection of wooden deck platform in rear garden.

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**

### **66.2 Correspondence re planning matters**

**66.2.1** Trees in conservation area application. Case Ref No. 14/02116/ITCA For Westbury Spring House, West End by The Blue Tree Company. Reduce 1 Ash tree by 2 to 3 metres, reduce 1 Elm tree by 3 to 4 metres and remove one Purple Plum.

NHDC Decision Notice: No objection.

#### **66.2.2** 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.

NHDC Decision Notice: Conditional permission.

**66.2.3** Case Ref No: 14/01941/1 Land Adjacent To Ashridge Farm, Ashwell Street for Tingdene Developments Ltd. Further correspondence from parishioners, objecting to the proposals, since the meeting of the Planning Committee Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September was noted.

#### **66.2.4** Case Ref No: 14/02267/1 at 30 West End.

**66.2.4.1** Further correspondence from parishioners, objecting to the proposals, since the meeting of the Planning Committee Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September was noted.

**66.2.4.2** Response from District Councillor Andrew Young to the request to call in the application. Cllr Young had indicated that he would not call in the application on the grounds that it was very little different to the previous application that had been granted permission. Cllr Peter Long expressed his concerns, as had been already been put to Cllr Young and the Planning Officer, that the second application contained insufficient detail, particularly re the increase in footprint and the parking provision, included significant differences in the fenestration and had no reference to the use of frosted glass in windows overlooking neighbours as had been the case previously. He proposed that a response be sent to Cllr Young expressing the Parish Council's concern at his decision and requesting that he use his influence to ensure that the

Planning Officer specified sufficient detail in any grant of permission and withdrew permitted development rights.

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

**Clerk**

**66.3** Cllr Long wished it to be noted that it was now five years since the District Council had changed the planning system for a trial period. Previously parish councils had the right to call in applications; this was now only a power held by district councillors and such applications were considered by a central planning committee not at area level. He proposed that a request be made to revert to the old system. Other parish councillors expressed their long held concerns that the views of the Parish Council held very little weight. It was noted that the Localism Act and Neighbourhood Plans should in theory give parish councils a greater say but the reality of how this would work in practice was unknown.

It was **resolved** to write to Oliver Heald MP requesting whether a Neighbourhood Plan was an appropriate route to addressing the problem.

**Clerk**

It was **resolved** to write to NHDC expressing the view of the Parish Council that all its consultation rights in planning had now been taken away.

**Clerk**

**67. REPORT FROM STREETS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** (Chairman Mike Berry)

(draft minutes meeting 24<sup>th</sup> September available, next meeting Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November)

**67.1** Herts Highways (HCC). Cllr Mark White reported that Herts Highways had now emptied the gully at Partridge Hill. Cllr Long requested what progress there had been with rectifying problems with the part-night lighting. It was noted that action on this, and other matters, had been agreed at the meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter in June; he had been asked for an update. In response to a question it was noted that the overgrown vegetation on the Bear Lane verge adjacent to the school was the responsibility of Herts Highways. It was understood that the school had requested that problems be attended to.

**67.2** Lock Up. Cllr Mark White reported that the information sign had been refurbished.

**68. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE** (Chairman Daniel Mathews)

(draft minutes meeting 29<sup>th</sup> September available, next meeting Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January)

**68.1** Allotments at Small Gains. Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that a tenants' meeting would be held on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 9.30am.

**69. REPORT FROM CHARACTER AREAS COMMITTEE** (Chairman Martin Hoffman)

**69.1** Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported (i) there would be an autumn review to determine any tree work required, (ii) working party dates had been arranged (Sat & Sun 25/26<sup>th</sup> October and Sat & Sun 29/30<sup>th</sup> November), (iii) there had been a further complaint from a neighbour re noise.

**69.2** Churchyard. A date had been scheduled for a meeting with PCC representatives to discuss grounds maintenance responsibilities.

**70. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**70.1** It was agreed that a date be set for the autumn Finance Committee meeting.

**Clerk**

**70.2** Proposal for approval of Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

**Clerk**

**71. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**71.1** Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader David Short) David Short reported that a meeting was to be scheduled.

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

**71.3** Yearbook Group (leader David Short) David Short reported that there were twelve individuals involved and all was progressing well. It was noted that following the co-options, David Short would now be the Parish Council representative on the group.

**71.4** Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that access to the new software required to send letters to offending motorists had now been released following five months of none being available. The previous working software had been removed with no explanation.

**71.5** Church clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that a first meeting had taken place, various investigations were underway and a further meeting scheduled. With regard to the legality of the chimes of Big Ben, although information had been supplied from elsewhere, it was agreed to pursue with Oliver Heald MP, details of the legal situation.

**GEL**

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

It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders for members of the public to contribute

**72.1** Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey reported information received, (i) arrests had been made in connection with fraud; vulnerable people in the local area had been victims, (ii) a police consultation had

been launched on victims of crime with the objective of improving victim support. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his hope that this would result in some positive action rather than a publicity exercise; he would supply a written question for the Police and Crime Commissioner for the North Herts Town & Parish Conference on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

**72.2 Youth Matters.** Cllr Jane Buxton expressed her view that more encouragement should be given to get young people involved in community affairs. She proposed that an invitation be extended to interested individuals to attend a Parish Council meeting. **EJB/JC**

**72.3 Village Hall.** Cllr Mark White reported that he would attend the next meeting scheduled for later in the month.

**72.4 Museum.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that funds usually forthcoming from the Ashwell Show would not be available this year; income had been badly affected by poor weather. It was his intention, as had been stated previously, to propose to the Finance Committee that a grant be made by the Parish Council.

**72.5** Cllr Mark White reported his concerns re a sandwich board advertising the Bushel & Strike that had been chained to a lighting column in the High Street. It was agreed to write to the landlord requesting that it be removed. **Clerk**

**72.6** Parishioner David Sims reported his understanding that there was a threat to the mobile library service. It was noted that an HCC consultation on libraries had just commenced and would run until December. Details would be included in the agenda for the next Council meeting. **Clerk**

**72.7** Parishioner Madeleine Legg reported her concerns that advertising posters for the Ashwell Show were still in situ at several locations. It was agreed that this be forwarded to the Ashwell Show organisers. **Clerk**

**72.8** Parishioner David Short reported a problem with a rights of way sign on the junction of Ashwell Street and the shire baulk. It was noted that all Highways related items could be reported to HCC either on their online system or by telephone (contact details in *Ashwell Yearbook* and on the green card distributed to all households with the last edition).

**Meeting closed at 9.20pm**

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

#### **Items routinely forwarded to parish councillors by email**

- North Herts District Council -weekly ‘Members Information’
- HAPTC -Briefings and Bulletins.
- SLCC -updates and newsletters.
- Police Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins.

#### **Also this month**

- NHDC notification re report on Asset Disposal and Community Asset Transfer Policies considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th September and Cabinet on 23rd September. The Committee’s report available on <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/aksnherts/users/public/admin/kab71.pl>
- North Herts & District Citizens Advice Bureau. Invitation to 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and AGM Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October.
- NHDC Planning and Building Control Customer Liaison Panel 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Presentation by Dr Tom Day, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, ‘Hertfordshire’s Ecological Networks’ (Powerpoint presentation available).
- Hertfordshire Physical Activity and Sport Framework. Aimed at county, district and borough, town and parish councils, public health leads, local Strategic Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Board members, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, third sector agencies, Healthwatch and community agencies. ‘... designed to help organisations in Hertfordshire to work together and provide them with a strong, evidence-based framework for action.’ Consultation period from 10th September - 10th October. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/689JWYQ>
- Letter from the Local Government Boundary Commission re consultation on Electoral Review of Hertfordshire County Council: Draft recommendations. Details available on [www.consultation/lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation/lgbce.org.uk). Deadline for responses 3rd November 2014.
- Notification from Ashley Hawkins, NHDC Community Development Officer, re Baldock 10k race passing through Bygrave, Ashwell and Newnham, Sunday 14th September.

