

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on  
Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

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

**50. APOLOGIES** Cllr Mike Berry (unwell), Jane Buxton (other commitment).

**51. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 7<sup>th</sup> August 2014 including *in camera* item**

Proposal for approval and signature.

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

It was noted that the minutes of the *in camera* items at 2<sup>nd</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> August meetings had both been released into the public domain.

**51.1** (August *in camera* item 3) It was noted that the following statement had been issued,

‘The Parish Council understands that, following an interview with the police, Mr Martin McBeal agreed to make a public apology to the Parish Council. No apology has, to date, been received by the Parish Council.’

It was noted that Mr McBeal had not yet apologised but had asked the Chairman when and how the Parish Council would like to receive it. It was proposed that the apology should be made verbally to the Parish Council at the beginning of the next Council meeting. Cllr Martin Hoffman, reflecting the collective views of the Council, proposed that, as well as an apology to the Parish Council, it should specifically include personal apologies to the two lady councillors about whom offensive comments of a sexual nature had been made and were extremely upset by this. Also, with regard to the allegation that he had “slagged off the people of Ashwell”, this had been refuted by parishioners attending the meeting who had spontaneously contacted him confirming he had never even mentioned “the people of Ashwell”.

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

**Clerk**

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

**52.1** (August Council, 41.1) Parish clock. It was noted that that there had still been no response from the Diocese as to whether a full faculty or a variation would be required for the volume reducing device. A full quotation from Wayne Francis of Clockwise Restorations was also pending.

**Clerk**

**52.2** (August Council, 41.3) Three councillor vacancies. It was noted that the vacancies had been advertised as agreed; there had been three applications to date. To join the Parish Council as a co-opted member each candidate would have to receive an absolute majority of councillors present and voting; this would take place at the October Council meeting.

**52.3** (August Council 42.4) 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 Ashwell services were at risk and proposed that responses should concentrate specifically on these. He had circulated a flyer to bus users. Parishioner Joan Ridley had also been active in publicizing the consultation through notices at bus stops and a flyer in the *Ashwell Village News*. The Chairman commended her for her contribution and noted that the Parish Council welcomed and encouraged such engagement by parishioners. Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that he would draft a response on behalf of the Parish Council and circulate this to other councillors before submission. Appropriate county councillors would also be lobbied.

**DMM**

**53. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

**53.1** Stop Stansted Expansion-press release. It was noted that Parishioner Richard Slatter continued to monitor such matters and the Aircraft Noise Working Group would be reconvened if necessary.

**53.3** HCC Hertfordshire Town and Parish Councils Conference Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 9.30-1.00pm at Robinson House, Stevenage. Cllr Peter Long reported that he had attended a similar event previously and found it to be of little value. It was noted that Cllr Bridget Macey had attended meetings of the North Herts group on behalf of the Parish Council; their last meeting had included agenda items for the conference organised annually by the District Council, also in October. It was agreed that no representative attend the County Council event.

**53.4** Hedge cutting by farmer at Small Gains. It was reported that a number of complaints had been received from parishioners concerned that the hedges had been cut very drastically, there had apparently been few, if any, safety precautions (of particular concern adjacent to the junior football pitch), the

prunings had been left along the road and verges very untidily and, when eventually some had been cleared, many had been dumped into the ditch. It was agreed to write to the farmer believed to be responsible, Mr Northern, expressing concern and requesting that all remaining prunings be removed as soon as possible, including those blocking the ditches. **Clerk**

#### **54. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**54.1** 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)*

**54.1.1** 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.

Agreed response to NHDC: No objections. **Clerk**

**54.1.2** Case Ref No: 14/02267/1 30 West End. Full Planning Permission: Detached 4-bedroom dwelling and detached outbuilding following demolition of existing detached bungalow.

It was noted that the Parish Council had recommended refusal for a previous application on this site on the grounds that the footprint was too large; NHDC had, however, granted permission. The current application stated that the footprint now proposed was larger than in the previous application. It was agreed that an on-site meeting of the Planning Committee consider the application. **Clerk**

**54.2** Correspondence re planning matters.

**54.2.1** Case Ref No: 14/01978/ICM Erection of kiosk at Ashwell Water Recycling Centre off Common Lane.

NHDC decision notice: No objections. It was noted that the Parish Council had also made no objections.

**54.2.2** Case Ref No: 13/02652/1 Ashwell End Farm, Loves Lane.

Replacement 2 bedroom detached dwelling following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings. Notification from NHDC that appeal to Planning Inspectorate against NHDC decision to refuse had been dismissed.

**54.2.3** 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 noted that this would be considered at a site meeting by the Planning Committee on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 9.00am. The meeting had been widely publicized by the Parish Council and local residents.

**54.2.4** Letter from Dr Caroline Russell on behalf of Ashwell Surgery. In response to concerns that proposed new housing would adversely affect the service provided she wished to reassure parishioners that the surgery would be 'quite happy' to take on extra patients and that the health care facilities would be tailored to meet the number of patients registered. Cllr Dr Martin Hoffman confirmed that this had always been the case.

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

(Next meeting scheduled for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September)

Nothing to report but see 60.1.1 below.

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

(Next meeting scheduled for Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September) Nothing to report.

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

**57.1** The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that autumn working parties would be scheduled shortly.

**57.2** St Mary's Churchyard. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a meeting with PCC representatives was to be scheduled for early October to discuss future maintenance arrangements. The PCC was organising the tree work to which the Parish Council had agreed to contribute 50% of the cost.

#### **58. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(Autumn meeting date to be agreed)

**58.1** Correspondence received.

**58.1.1** Insurance renewal information (see accounts payment item 118). It was noted that there was a three-year agreement with the current supplier. It was agreed that no changes were required at present.

**58.1.2** Audit 2013-14. The annual return had been received from the External Auditor; no significant issues had been raised. There had been a minor query re the reporting of grant funds; this would be clarified. **Clerk**

**58.1.2** Public toilets service agreement with NHDC. Further to previous email correspondence, a letter, dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014, had now been received from NHDC informing that the £2,000 outstanding since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 had been paid by BACS direct to the Parish Council's bank account. It was reported that, as of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014, this had still not been received. District Councillor Andrew Young had been informed of the situation and had requested it be investigated. It was noted that there was a history of NHDC payments going astray and being paid to incorrect recipients.

**58.2** Locum Clerk (see payments item 113). The Chairman reported his view that Mrs Val Moles had provided an excellent service whilst the Clerk had been away and proposed that a letter of thanks be sent; this was agreed. **Clerk**

**58.3** Approval of September Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

## **59. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**59.1** Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Peter Long) It was noted that Cllr Peter Long had distributed a written report containing relevant information and various proposals including the holding of a public meeting. Following discussion it was proposed that, despite the absence of an approved District Plan or a confirmed date for one, there was considerable merit in proceeding with an Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. Guidelines, available on-line, would have to be followed including clear evidence that it was a community venture not just that of the Parish Council. Once published, a comprehensive and robust Ashwell Plan would considerably strengthen the village position in any communication with the District Council. It was acknowledged that as and when the District Plan did appear, minor amendments might have to be incorporated but it was unlikely that the majority of it would be affected. It was agreed that the proposal be accepted and the Neighbourhood Plan progressed with Parishioner David Short leading the group.

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

**59.3** Yearbook Group. The Chairman reported that Parishioner David Short would be pleased to act as group leader; this was agreed. David Short reported that a meeting had been scheduled for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September; new members had now been recruited to fill all of the vacancies.

**59.4** Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Hoffman reported that the group had continued with monitoring activities. They were, however, still not fully operational due to restrictions caused by delay of software to generate letters to drivers.

**59.5** Community Housing Group (leader Cllr Jane Buxton) Nothing to report.

**59.6** Church clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Lee reported that the first meeting was now scheduled for later in the month and he would report on this to the October Council meeting. Cllr Peter Long proposed that the question as to why the chimes of Ashwell Church were apparently illegal but not those of Big Ben be put to MP Oliver Heald; this was agreed. **GEL**

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

**60.1.1** Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey reported,

(i) The latest issue of Police Rural News had focussed on the increase in break-ins to outbuildings; additional resources had been allocated to address the problem.

(ii) Following a request that the village be considered for a 'no cold calling zone' categorisation, she had asked PCSO Chris Brabrook to supply information.

(iii) Photographic evidence of another case of a vehicle mounting the pavement outside Foresters Cottages in the High Street had been forwarded to PCSO Chris Brabrook. He had determined that the vehicle was not local and, although willing to pursue regular offenders particularly those parked for long periods of time, his recommendation was that physical prevention measures would probably be more effective. It was noted that the one bollard installed by Herts Highways was failing to prevent the problem occurring. It was understood that the request for additional bollards had been rejected by Herts Highways on the grounds that the pavement would be too narrow for pram/wheelchair access. It was agreed that the Streets & Environment Committee discuss all options and reiterate the request to Herts Highways for action.

**S&E**

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

**60.2** Items raised by parishioners.

**60.2.1** Parishioner David Sims wished to emphasize the concerns already raised re the hedge cutting at Small Gains, in particular the apparent lack of health & safety consideration (see 53.4 above).

**60.2.2** Parishioner and Accies committee member John Yianni echoed the concerns of David Sims re the hedge cutting at Small Gains.

He also requested clarification re questions put by the Accies at the meeting held earlier in the year with two parish councillors and whether the responses had been adequate. Cllr Daniel Mathews agreed to check whether there was anything outstanding. **DMM**

With regard to youth matters, Mr Yianni requested whether any action had been taken on outstanding proposals that were to have been progressed by Cllr Jane Smith had she not resigned. Cllr John Connolly agreed to pursue this. **JC**

**60.2.3** Parishioner Martin McBeal reiterated his previous concerns re blocks of wood and stones placed on the grass verge at Small Gains Lane; he considered these to be a safety hazard. It was noted that the view had been expressed that these prevented vehicles from mounting the grass verge and, as there was no pavement, thus provided a safer route for pedestrians, particularly children walking to the sports field. The Parish Council had agreed with this. It was agreed that the Recreation & Facilities Committee reconsider the matter. **R&F**

**Meeting closed at 9.00pm**

## Appendix 1 – General material received

- North Herts District Council -weekly 'Members Information'
- HAPTC -Briefings and Bulletins.
- SLCC -updates and newsletters.
- Police -Rural News.

## Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -September 2014				Date		3rd September 2014	
Proposed (i) Cllr Long (ii) Cllr Mathews							
			£	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>			s106	Grants	Precept	Other	Total
44	Santander interest a/c	bank interest				2.56	2.56
45	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent				68.75	68.75
46	Ashwell Cricket Club	re insurance claim				110.72	110.72
47	E H Crouch	cemetery 14.15				100.00	100.00
<b>Total</b>			0.00	0.00	0.00	282.03	282.03
<b>Payments</b>							
<b>By Direct Debit</b>			A&O	CA	S & E	R&F	VAT
106	E.ON (01/07/14)	chapel electricity				11.00	
107	BT (04/08/14)	office telephone and broadband	127.84				25.56
<b>By Cheque</b>							
108	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1,113.36				
109	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		38.92	124.74	38.92	
110	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec				58.92	
111	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue			50.40	1.20	
112	K Clifford	Premises duties				30.00	
113	Mrs V Moles	Locum clerk	117.50				
114	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd	grass cutting at rec (02/08 )				29.07	5.81
115	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance	grounds sheet 28 (inc two extra seats)			55.00		11.00
116	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance	grounds sheet 29 (plus Silver St)		30.00	170.00	215.00	83.00
117	BDO LLP	external audit	300.00				60.00
118	Broker Network Ltd	annual insurance	4782.87				
<b>Total</b>			6,441.57	68.92	400.14	384.11	185.37
<b>Outstanding Accounts</b>							
Yearbook 2014 adverts						290.00	
NHDC payment for public toilets						2,000.00	
<b>Total</b>							2,290.00
<b>Money at bank</b>							
Current Account		31st August 2014				36,558.54	
Deposit Account		1st August 2014				30,175.60	
<b>Total</b>							66,734.14
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after							210.72
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding							271.66
<b>Total</b>							66,673.20
Total after paying this months cheques							58,946.99
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques							28,771.39