

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 4th June 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Seven parishioners. Three police representatives; PCSO Chris Brabrook, PC Mike Hardiman, Sergeant Steve Oliphant.

17. APOLOGIES Councillors John Connolly (work commitment), Daniel Mathews (away on holiday).

18. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING (AGM) 7th May 2014

Re minute item 1, Cllr Martin Hoffman requested the word 'difficult' be replaced by 'challenging'; this was agreed.

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

19. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

19.1 Police/Invitation for police representative to attend to update on local policing provision.

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

PCSO Chris Brabrook presented data on local crime statistics. Crimes reported included theft of heating oil, push bikes and vehicle batteries. There had also been domestic/personal incidents and damage to vehicles. In the last year there had been one house burglary and several break-ins of outbuildings/garages; the latter targeting metal and tools. He encouraged all to consider whether levels of security were adequate; advice was available on request. The crime detection rate for the local area was 40%; this was above the Hertfordshire and national averages. The recent break-in at the Recreation Ground, and others on the same night, were currently being investigated (see also 23.3 below).

Sergeant Steve Oliphant reported on resource deployment changes since the appointment of the Police & Crime Commissioner. The Royston neighbourhood team comprised three constables and three PCSO's who could be deployed anywhere within the geographical area according to local need. The area covered was large and rural and it was considered more effective to allocate resources more flexibly rather than having one constable per ward as in the previous system. PCSO Chris Brabrook remained the first contact point for Ashwell; the most effective route was to use the 101 telephone number. He was supported part-time by PCSO Penny Tomsett who also covered Royston. Any particular officer could be asked for by name and would respond if available; any messages left were picked up by duty officers on a regular basis. Parish councillors applauded the work and commitment of PCSO Chris Brabrook who was in regular contact via Cllr Bridget Macey.

Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his frustration and annoyance at problems encountered with the Speedwatch initiative, now renamed Drivesafe. He reported that since the changes made by the new Police & Crime Commissioner, matters that had previously been working well had become increasingly problematic. He cited (i) prohibition of monitoring in Station Road because of challenges to the highways legislation on speed limits, (ii) replacement batteries for equipment that took 68 days to be supplied, (iii) failure of new software used to generate warning letters so volunteers resorted to typing out their own. He wished it be noted that he was in no way critical of local officers and was aware that since the appointment of the Police & Crime Commissioner responsibility had been transferred to a central department. He was of the view that this department was unresponsive and offered no encouragement or support to volunteers. It was agreed that County Councillor Tony Hunter be requested to pursue with Herts Highways the problems with Station Road speed limit legislation and report back on action taken.

The Chairman thanked Sergeant Oliphant and his officers for their attendance; it was agreed that this had been very helpful.

19.2 Ashwell Village Trust. The meeting of the trustees to appoint Cllr Bridget Macey as the new parish councillor trustee was noted.

20. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

20.1 Invitation to the North Herts HomeFirst conversation event on Wednesday 25th June (project that enables residents to be cared for at home by a team of health and social care staff rather than being admitted to hospital).

20.2 Invitation from NHDC Monitoring Officer to a Governance Conference for existing and new Members of the District Council and Parish Councils, 26th June 2014.

Cllr Peter Long wished it to be noted that he was a parish councillor representative for NHDC on its Standards Board. He emphasized the need for parish councillors to be adequately trained in matters relating

to the Code of Conduct and governance responsibilities. NHDC regularly provided training for district councillors and he encouraged parish councillors to take advantage of this invitation extended to them.

20.3 Invitation to North Hertfordshire Association of Parish Town and Community Councils Meeting Wednesday July 9th Mrs Howard Hall Letchworth. Cllr Bridget Macey notified that she would attend.

21. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

21.1 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.

The recommendation for refusal of this application agreed at the Planning Committee meeting held earlier in the evening was noted. It was agreed, as was previous policy, should the Planning Officer be of a different view and be minded to recommend acceptance, that District Councillor Andrew Young be requested to call-in the item so that it would be determined by committee.

Clerk

21.2 Correspondence re planning matters.

21.2.1 NHDC street naming consultation for new development at 61 Station Road. It was noted that proposals received via the NHDC officer were 'Sorrel Place', 'Tansy Close' or 'Angelica Place'. Parish councillors expressed their concerns that none of these were appropriate. Proposals considered to better reflect local heritage were 'Normans Close' and 'Philosopher's Gate'. The latter was the preferred choice.

Clerk

21.2.2 Applications to NHDC re works to trees in the conservation area.

Reviewed by Cllr Jane Buxton; no objections noted.

(i) 24 West End 14/01215/1TCA. Re-pollard by 80% to approx 3metres 2 Horse chestnut trees (T1, T2), Reduce back by 2 metres and reduce height by 2 metres 1 Yew tree (T3), Reduce to previous points approx 60% 1 Lime tree (T4), Raise canopy over road to 5metres 1 Lime tree (T5, T6)

(ii) 51b High Street 14/01120/1TCA. Removal of 15 Leyland Cypress Trees

(iii) 21 Mill Street 14/01214/1TCA. Reduce by 25% 1 Walnut tree

It was noted that this application had been received by the Planning Officer on 6th May and granted approval on 13th May. Although the particular application had not been considered contentious, it had raised concerns that the agreed procedure for the Parish Council to be consulted within the allowed six-week period had not been followed. It was agreed to make a request to the Area Planning Officer (copy to District Councillor Andrew Young) that the agreed procedure be adhered to in future.

Clerk

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

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

22.1 Herts Highways. Cllr Mike Berry reported that a meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his designated highways engineer was scheduled for Wednesday 11th June. The matter raised by Cllr Martin Hoffman re speed monitoring in Station Road would be included on the agenda (see 19.1 above).

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

(draft minutes of meeting 21st May available; date of next meeting Monday 4th August)

23.1 The draft minutes of the AGM charity 'Allotment for Exercise and Recreation' were noted.

23.2 Parish Clock/night-time noise complaints.

23.2.1 Correspondence. The following was noted

(i) Diocese of St Albans. Email correspondence with Diocesan Pastoral & Advisory Secretary and the Clerk to the Diocesan Registrar re (a) faculty for installation of timer, (b) faculty for installation of volume reducing mechanism as proposed by Save the Chimes group. Letter from the Registrar with the Faculty giving permission for installation of the timer; included documents for completion once work undertaken.

(ii) Mr Guy Reed and the Ashwell Advocates. Various items and copied items received; responses sent as necessary.

(iii) Save the Chimes group. Copies of various emails re media coverage received. Emails sent to update on progress re the second faculty for installation of the proposed volume reducing mechanism.

(iv) St Mary's PCC. Emails sent to Rev Chris Ball and Churchwardens to update.

(v) NHDC. Emails/letter sent to update environmental health officers. Request from NHDC officer Andy Godman *'it would be helpful if the PC... could agree a provisional installation date for the differential timer and the kick-off for the trial. Once I have such a date I can formally write a letter of comfort to the PC setting out the regulatory position.'*

The Chairman reported that, following receipt of the faculty from the Diocese and the balance of funding forwarded by a representative of the AshwellAdvocates, the two suppliers had been requested to progress works. Dates for when the works could be scheduled were pending.

The Chairman reported that a request had been received with the funding,

‘This amount has been contributed by Ashwell Advocates and other families affected by the night-time noise from the church chimes/bells. Given we are providing this money promptly in good faith, I would ask that if you do receive a contribution from NHDC for the timed silencing mechanism, the same amount is refunded to us so that I can return it pro-rata to those who contributed.’

It was noted that there had earlier been reference to a possible grant of £500 from NHDC. It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed, in accordance with the view expressed by many parishioners, that no public money be spent on silencing the overnight chimes.

It was **resolved** that the Parish Council remained of this view and would not wish to be involved in any application to NHDC for funding. It was noted that community groups were able to apply direct to NHDC for funding if they wished.

Cllr Graham Lee wished to note the email he had received from the AshwellAdvocates. He proposed that NHDC be asked to supply information on how double glazing and open windows influenced the interpretation of sound level recordings.

The Chairman reported on a meeting of the Save the Chimes group that he had attended. The group had requested the opportunity to present their proposals for a selective volume reducing device. It was agreed that full details be supplied prior to the parish council meeting so that parish councillors had the opportunity to study them carefully and in full.

Cllr Peter Long wished it to be noted that there were certain exemptions from the Environmental Protection Act 1990, notably noise from traffic and aircraft; he understood that the chimes of Big Ben and York Minster could also not be challenged. He proposed that a working group be established to lobby for a change in the law to exclude parish clocks. He was aware of many communities, particularly in rural areas, who would be supportive of such a campaign. He proposed that Oliver Heald MP, be approached for support and advice on the most effective way to launch a campaign.

Some parish councillors expressed their concerns that the arguments over the parish clock had already had a very detrimental effect on the community and did not wish this to be continued in any way.

It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted; a working group would be formed led by Cllr Graham Lee.

23.3 Parish clock/annual service and works identified. It was reported that Smith of Derby had attended to undertake the annual service. They had identified problems with one of the S-loop mechanisms used to isolate the clock mechanism during bell-ringing and had recommended works to include all six bells to avoid the risk of damage. It was agreed that works be progressed.

23.4 Break-in to the old pavilion on the Recreation Ground. Cllr Peter Long reported that this had taken place on the night of 28/29th May. The lock had been ripped off, two jerry cans of fuel stolen and the heavy roller damaged in an attempt to remove the radiator. The police had been informed and were investigating; it was understood that other local premises had suffered break-ins on the same night. The insurance company had been informed; it was agreed that a claim be progressed. It was noted that the vehicular gate was always kept locked when not required and agreed that the Recreation & Facilities Committee discuss what further security arrangements could be put in place.

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

24.1 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that repairs to the boundary wall had been discussed. Surrounding vegetation (brambles/nettles etc) was currently blocking access. When this had died down in the autumn quotes would be obtained from suppliers and works progressed.

24.2 Arbury Banks. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that repairs to the information panel were in hand.

25. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

25.1 Financial Regulations/preferred suppliers (i) for tree work. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he and the Clerk had met with Mr Fred Burkett of The Blue Tree Company. He was satisfied that the necessary criteria would be met and proposed addition to the list. (ii) for repairs and maintenance of the parish clock. The Chairman proposed Smith of Derby for addition to the list on the grounds that they had provided a good service for many years.

It was **resolved** that both of the above be added to the preferred suppliers list and that this be reviewed in one year.

Clerk

25.2 Audit 2013-14. It was noted that (i) a satisfactory report had been received from the Internal Auditor, (ii) the public notice period from 2nd to 27th June had commenced and been advertised as required, (iii) the Annual Return and supporting documents would be submitted to the External Auditor for the audit date of 30th June, (iii) the annual report including the unaudited statement of accounts would be published on the notice board and website by 30th June and the audited statement of accounts by 30th September. **Clerk**

25.3 June Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

Clerk

26. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

26.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group. Leader Cllr Peter Long reported that David Short was to join the group. The next meeting was to be scheduled for mid-late July.

26.2 Website Group. Nothing to report.

26.3 Yearbook Group. Leader Cllr Jane Smith reported on the recent meeting. Publication would continue subject to recruiting a new project manager; a volunteer was being sought.

26.4 Speeding Watch Group. Leader Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that, as agreed, a quote for the purchase of equipment was in hand but there were various issues to be addressed before this was progressed. (see also 19.1 above).

26.5 Community Housing Group (see also 27.2.2 below). Leader Cllr Jane Buxton reported (i) the very poor record of Origin Housing Association to attend to repairs requested by Walkdens' residents continued; this was despite promises made at meetings re their planning application to extend the development. (ii) Howard Cottage Housing Association had informed her that they had been asked to discuss further their involvement in the 61 Station Road development.

It was agreed that NHDC, as the housing authority, be lobbied to take action re Origin Housing Association; a letter to be sent to their Housing Officer, copied to District Councillor Andrew Young, expressing severe concerns and a request that urgent action be taken.

Clerk

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

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

27.1.1 Police matters –see 19.1 above.

27.1.2 Village Hall. Cllr Mark White (as representative for the Parish Council) reported that he had attended the AGM. He had been provided with a copy of the latest accounts; the loan for the refurbishment had now been repaid in full. The proposal that the Parish Council take on trusteeship had again been discussed; concerns remained that volunteers to take on the role were increasingly difficult to find. He had been requested to raise the matter to determine whether parish councillors were prepared to discuss the matter. Cllr Peter Long declared an interest as clerk to the trustees. His personal view was that there would be financial advantages if the Parish Council took over responsibility as trustee; VAT on expenditure could be reclaimed, grant funding would be easier to obtain and, if required, funding could be raised from the village via the precept.

It was agreed that the Village Hall trustees be requested to provide a detailed proposal. The Parish Council would, without any commitment, consider and discuss this.

27.1.3 Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that details of funds raised by the At Home had been received. Whilst a very good amount, this was not sufficient to cover running costs. It was possible that the Museum could request a grant from the Parish Council.

27.1.4 Henry Colbron Trust. It was reported that representatives of the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company had provisionally arranged to visit the village on Friday 20th June.

27.2 Items raised by parishioners.

27.2.1 Parish Clock (see also 23.2 above). Parishioner Mr Martin McBeal requested information with regard to a question he alleged to have been put to him by Cllr Peter Long at the Parish Council meeting following the Annual Parish meeting. The Chairman asked Mr McBeal if he could provide clarification. Cllr Peter Long asked if this was the question he had asked to determine whether Mr McBeal had been speaking as an individual or on behalf of the Save the Chimes group when he had made the statement that if the chimes of the parish clock were turned off by either the district or parish council he intended to sue the party responsible. Cllr Peter Long went on to say that, should Mr McBeal wish to take the matter further, the route for this was via the Monitoring Officer, Katie White, at NHDC.

27.2.2 Walkdens/Origin Housing Association (see also 26.5 above). Two tenants of Origin Housing reported their ongoing concerns re the poor response to requests for repairs. It was reported that, contrary to information received earlier, Origin Housing Association had not withdrawn the planning application for

an extension to Walkdens. It was now understood that it was to be considered by the NHDC Planning Committee; as it did not appear of the agenda for the June meeting it was assumed that it would be considered at the July meeting or later.

It was agreed that the date be determined and the two residents informed.

Clerk

Meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Appendix 1 – General material received and forwarded by email

- 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 -June 2014			Date		4th June 2014	
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman	(ii) Cllr Macey		£	£	£	£
Receipts			s106	Grants	Precept	Other
9	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent				68.75
10	parishioner	cemetery 14.08				450.00
11	Henry Harris Funfair	rec rent				400.00
12	HMRC	VAT reclaim				859.36
13-21	various	allotment rent				65.00
22-25	various	yearbook adverts				410.00
26	Football Club	rent 2013-14				550.00
27	AshwellAdvocates and others	balance funding re parish clock				2171.25
Total			0.00	0.00	0.00	4,974.36
Payments			Committees			
By Direct Debit		A&O	CA	S & E	R&F	VAT
42	E.ON (02/05/14)	chapel electricity			11.00	
43	E.ON (26/05/14)	Pavilion electricity			137.09	27.42
44	BT (21/05/14)	office telephone and broadband	121.62			24.32
45	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	annual subscription	40.00			
By Cheque						
46	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1,113.36			
47	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		38.92	124.74	
48	M Barden	reimbursement expenses			5.40	
49	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec			59.12	
50	N Karen	Groundskeeper duties			58.50	
51	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	246.10		50.40	1.00
52	K Clifford	Premises duties			30.00	
53	Business Presentations	Design and layout Yearbook	1,000.00			
54	Business Presentations	Website changes 31/12/13 -14/04	170.00			
55	MCL Communications Ltd	annual web hosting	87.50			17.50
56	Smith of Derby	parish clock annual service			205.00	41.00
57	The Liberty Corporation Ltd	cleaning toilets 28/04 to 26/06			80.00	16.00
58	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 21		55.00	250.00	61.00
59	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 22			46.00	9.20
60	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 23		55.00	215.00	54.00
61	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 23a			15.00	3.00
62	The BlueTree Co Ltd	hedge at Springs		110.00		
63	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd	grass cutting at rec (07/05 and 20/05)			58.14	11.63
64	D Home	woodwork repairs to pavilion			510.00	
65	Filcris Ltd	sign for Small Gains Lane			60.50	12.10
Total			2,778.58	258.92	1,775.27	277.17
Outstanding Accounts						
	allotment rent for plot 7b					5.00
	Yearbook 2014 adverts					525.00
	NHDC grant for public toilets					2,000.00
Total						2,530.00
Money at bank						
	Current Account	27th May 2014				50,905.92
	Deposit Account	31st March 2014				30,162.97
Total						81,068.89
<i>Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after</i>						-
<i>Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding</i>						427.50
Total						80,641.39
<i>Total after paying this months cheques</i>						75,370.91
<i>Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques</i>						45,207.94