

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 3rd December 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Jane Buxton, John Connolly, Martin Hoffman, Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, David Short, David Sims, Bridget Macey.

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

84. APOLOGIES Cllrs Mike Berry (unwell), Daniel Mathews (work commitment).

85. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 5th November 2014

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

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

86.1 (November Council 75.1, October Council 64.1, September Council 51.1 and August *in camera* item 3; ‘The Parish Council understands that, following an interview with the police, Mr Martin McBeal agreed to make a public apology to the Parish Council.’). It was noted again that the public apology for offensive comments made on Facebook had not been received.

It was **resolved** that this item be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that it was a sensitive issue for some individuals and had potential legal implications.

[The following minuted from the *in camera* session]

It was noted that informal legal advice had been sought as to other avenues the Parish Council could pursue to obtain the promised apology. The view was expressed that the individual responsible for the offensive comments, Mr Martin McBeal, had acted in a dishonourable and disloyal way in not giving the public apology that he had promised.

It was **resolved** that the matter would be included in the Chairman’s report in the 2015 edition of the *Ashwell Yearbook* and that Mr Martin McBeal would be named in this.

It was **resolved** that further advice would be taken from the police.

It was **resolved** that the minute of the *in camera* item be released into the public domain.

It was noted that all resolutions were unanimous.

86.2 (November Council, 75.3 and Finance Committee 12th November, 4.5) Parish Clock/proposed overnight volume reducing device for the quarter chimes. It was reported that (i) Faculty: the St Mary’s PCC resolution in support had been forwarded but the public notice from the Diocese for the 28 day consultation period was still pending, (ii) Funding: a response had been received from Mrs Sylvia McBeal, Treasurer, ‘Save the Chimes now closed and the re-opened group of Save Ashwell Church Chimes’. She had given reassurances and would ‘let everyone know during the 28 day public notice period that the money collected is for reduction of the chimes at night’. It was agreed to continue to put pressure on the Diocese to supply the public notice. **Clerk**

86.3 (November Council, 75.4) HCC consultation on review of county council funded bus services (www.hertsdirect.org/busconsult). It was noted that Cllr Daniel Mathews had provided an update on actions re the threats to Ashwell services.

It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for this item. Parishioner Joan Ridley reported that there was hope for some amendments to the original proposals and that these would benefit Ashwell; the final outcome was awaited. She also reported her ongoing concerns at the reliability of the service.

86.4 (November Council, 76.2) HCC consultation on ‘Inspiring Libraries’, a new 10-year strategy for the Hertfordshire Library Services. Cllrs Madeleine Legg and David Sims reported on actions objecting to the proposals to withdraw completely the mobile library service; it was hoped that some service would be retained albeit reduced.

86.5 (November Council, 76.6) North Herts Parish and Town Conference held on 22nd October. (i) Letter from the Chairman of the North Herts Association (NHAPTCC) requesting views on support for the association and the future of meetings. Cllr David Short reported his own concerns that these meetings were poorly supported by parish councils; it had to be accepted that some sessions were more useful than others but the networking opportunities were of value. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the presentation on the implications of the use of social media was available as a Powerpoint; she commended it to others.

86.6 (October Council, 65.1) Giving Time Project (focus on improving the recruitment of candidates to parish councils). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had attended the training event on 20th November 2014 and found it to be worthwhile. It had been reported that active councils who communicated with their residents tended to attract more volunteers. A copy of the presentation was awaited and would be distributed.

86.7 (November Council, 76.5) Response from Affinity Water re inadequate pressure in Claybush Road. It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for this item. Parishioner John Hare reported that he had received a response to his enquiry informing that the problem was due to a broken valve; there was an inherent, and long-standing, problem in the area due to the gradient.

86.8 (November Council, 76.5) PTA Bonfire Night. The Chairman commended Cllr David Short on his email to the organisers; this had thanked them for their good management of what had been a successful event despite the poor weather.

87. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED TO BE NOTED

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

87.1 Letter from the United Reformed Church re damage to their hall roof by an unidentified vehicle and a request that installation of yellow lines again be urgently sought. It was noted that other correspondence had also been received with reports of problems caused by bad parking. See Streets and Environment Committee report below.

87.2 Letter from contractor, WSP, working on behalf of HCC re Surface Water Management Plans. Request for any information on flooding issues and any sites 'that you consider as a priority for inclusion in the SWMP'. It was agreed that the Streets and Environment Committee would consider a response.

S&E

87.3 Email and notice from NHDC in response to the notification of the death of Cllr Peter Long. It was noted that the NHDC vacancy notice had been publicised. The closure date for the claim of an election was Wednesday 3rd December; a response from NHDC was thus still awaited.

88. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

88.1 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)

88.1.1 A meeting of the Planning Committee, Sunday 7th December, was noted; this to include:-

Case Ref No: 14/02927/1HH and 14/02928/1LB 8 Springhead

Full Permission Householder: Single storey side extension

Listed Building: Single storey side extension and internal alterations

Case Ref No: 14/02932/1 Sunnymead Farm, Station Road

Full Planning Permission: Six detached 5 bedroom dwellings with detached double garages following demolition of existing poultry houses. New access off Station Road, boundary wall and fencing and landscaping.

88.1.2 Case Ref No: 14/02899/1LB The Old Rectory, Hodwell

Listed Building: Remedial works to cellar to include forming an opening in basement wall to south (front) elevation to provide temporary access to facilitate basement floor tanking and installation of sump pumps. Following which basement wall opening to be made good.

It was noted that, for some previous listed building applications, the Parish Council had agreed to accept the advice of the conservation officer. The view was expressed, that as the Parish Council was a statutory consultee, it should make a positive response.

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: no objections.

Clerk

88.2 Correspondence re planning matters

88.2.1 (November Council, 77.2.2) Public consultation on the draft District Local Plan 2011-2031/Preferred Options.

Further information from NHDC was noted; the public consultation would run from 18th December to 6th February. Cllr David Short reported on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Group; their brief was much broader than responding to the current consultation and would take time. A wider group, including many residents from the Claybush Hill area, had met; the importance of informing and engaging parishioners to respond to the whole of the proposals, not just the Claybush site, had been agreed. (See also 94.2.5 below on behalf of Claybush residents). Members of this wider group planned to have a stand on the grassed area opposite the Museum on Saturday 6th December; they would distribute a leaflet encouraging parishioners to respond to the consultation and to make objections to the proposed housing allocation. Cllr David Short expressed his support for the objective to achieve better awareness. He had concerns that until the

consultation documents were published it was difficult to predict the exact format and content. He emphasized the need to consider the whole document not just the proposals for the Claybush site.

Cllr Martin Hoffman proposed that the Parish Council set up a group to thoroughly examine all the available documents and to formulate a response to the consultation from the Parish Council. He emphasized the need to respond with factual, not emotional, arguments. Cllrs David Short, Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, John Connolly and Martin Hoffman agreed to form this group. Other parish councillors would be kept informed and drafts circulated; a final response would be agreed at the February Council meeting.

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

CDS/GEL/MFL/JC/MGH

Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that a positive response had been received from Oliver Heald, MP, to attend a public meeting in January, assuming a date could be agreed that did not conflict with his parliamentary duties. It was agreed that he be asked to propose some dates and a venue be investigated. **MFL/Clerk**

Cllr Graham Lee reported that this matter had again raised the need to enhance communication with parishioners by wider use of email. He proposed that a database be created, not only for this current issue but for other parish council matters, that would allow items to be widely distributed electronically; individuals would be contacted to give their consent for inclusion.

It was **resolved** that the Parish Council register as a data controller with the Information Commissioner and that the proposal be accepted.

GEL/Clerk

88.2.2 Case Ref No: 14/02611/1 Land Adjacent to Ashridge Farm/rear 39-59 Station Road.

It was noted that this was an agenda item for the NHDC Planning Control Committee, Wednesday 17th December. The Chairman reported that a time slot to speak at the meeting had been reserved. As had been agreed, the views of the local residents were being considered as to who should be the speaker or speakers. All parties were in agreement re the points of objection to be made.

MNW/Clerk

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

(draft minutes of meeting 19th November available, next meeting Thursday 15th January 2015)

89.1 (November Council, 76.3 and S&E 19th November, 33.2) The Herts Highways 'Highways Together' project briefing by Ringway, 16th December 2-4pm at Hatfield, was noted.

89.2 (November Council, 76.7 and S&E 19th November, 33.1) Parking concerns. (See also 87.1 above and 94.2.2, 94.2.4 below). Further correspondence from parishioners was noted. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that the police had agreed to attend the next committee meeting on 15th January 2015. Cllr Graham Lee reported a proposal for prominent notices to be placed on offending vehicles; he had distributed several draft options for the wording. It was noted that the police had no objections to this.

It was **resolved** that the 'firm' option of wording be used; notices would be printed for use by parish councillors and others.

GEL

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

(draft minutes of meeting 29th September available, next meeting Monday 19th January 2015)

Nothing further to report.

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

91.1 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman thanked all those who had participated in working parties. A professional tree survey and inspection was currently being undertaken to update the existing documents.

91.2 St Mary's Churchyard. Cllr Hoffman wished it to be noted that, as it was formally 'closed' to burials, the Parish Council, as the local authority, had responsibility for routine maintenance. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) was responsible for the overall management and all graves and memorials. *Ad hoc* items were discussed with the PCC. Replacement of the fences and retaining walls along the Hodwell and Church Path boundaries had been proposed by the PCC. They had obtained quotes and he was concerned at the high cost of the works proposed. He requested parish councillors' views on whether such a large expenditure from public funds could be justified. The view was expressed that the specification should be questioned and also whether fences were really necessary given that a hedge had recently been planted along the whole of the Hodwell boundary.

92. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting Wednesday 12th November available)

92.1 Receipt of the parish taxbase information from NHDC was noted, also the invitation to a briefing meeting on 12th January and the deadline of 23rd January for submission of precept information.

92.2 The draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting, 12th November, and budget proposals were noted. It was proposed that the Parish Precept for 2015-16 be £52,000. This would represent an increase

of £1,000 from the previous year and allow for a £500 grant to the Museum plus other minor increases in costs over several categories.

This would mean a 90 pence increase per annum for a Band D household (£59.60 to £60.50pa).

It was **resolved** that the Parish Precept for 2015-16 be £52,000.

Clerk

It was **resolved** that the budget proposals for 2015-16 be accepted.

92.3 Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid (see appendix 2).

Clerk

93. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

93.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short; Cllr Graham Lee also a member) (see 88.2.1 above)

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

93.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that plans for the 2015 edition were progressing well.

93.4 Speed Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the group had restarted speed checks using the now reapproved software.

93.5 Church clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that a response from Oliver Heald, MP, re exemptions was understood to be received shortly.

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

Item taken at 8.30pm.

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

94.1.1 Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey drew attention to the meeting on 15th January; the police had agreed to attend (see 89.2 above).

94.1.2 Village Hall. Cllr Mark White reported that the management group had made requests to the builder on the adjacent site re the storage of materials against the boundary wall.

Pending

94.1.3 (November Council, 83.1.4) Report on youth matters.

94.2 Items raised by parishioners.

94.2.1 Parishioner Jill Powell wished to emphasize that the Neighbourhood Plan was not just about planning but also other village issues.

94.2.2 Parishioner Jo Aukland expressed her continuing frustration at the lack of action by Herts Highways to requests to ensure the safety of pedestrians and listed buildings from vehicles mounting the pavement outside Foresters Cottages. She regularly forwarded photographic evidence to County Councillor Tony Hunter and his highways engineer. She requested the support of the Parish Council. The Chairman reported that the Streets & Environment Committee was equally frustrated having raised the matter at many highways meetings over a considerable period. It was suggested that she should write to Oliver Heald, MP, requesting his support.

94.2.3 Parishioner Joan Ridley expressed her concern at recent developments and planning applications for large 5 bedroom houses when, in her view, the village needed smaller units of affordable and retirement dwellings. It was noted that a similar view had been expressed by the Parish Council.

94.2.4 Parishioner Jackie Embury expressed her support for the proposal to request that yellow lines be installed in Silver Street to prevent a repeat of the damage to the URC hall roof (see also 87.1 and 89.2 above). It was noted that enforcement was an issue; even if photographic evidence was provided, there was no authority who would take action against offenders. For this reason the Parish Council's view was, in general, to support installation of physical measures; persuading Herts Highways to install bollards, additional kerbing etc was, however, difficult.

94.2.5 Parishioner David Linsley reported on behalf of the residents in the vicinity of the Claybush site (see also 88.2.1 above). He emphasized this group's objective was to raise awareness of the public consultation on the draft District Local Plan 2011-2031/Preferred Options. They proposed to distribute two leaflets, one from the local residents and one ideally endorsed by the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan group. They had established a website to deliver information and to capture feedback; they would also like this to be linked to the Neighbourhood Plan group.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm

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.

Appendix 2