

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Fourteen. Mr Jeremy Pyatt re item 104.4.

**100. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Cllr Daniel Mathews (work commitment).

**101. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

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

**102. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS** –see below.

**103. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**103.1** Information from central government on the ‘Can Do’ guide for organisers of voluntary and community events.

**103.2** Central Bedfordshire Council: Notification of the consultation on the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Pre-Submission 2014 until 5pm, Monday, 31 March 2014.

Details on [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/gypsytravellerplan](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/gypsytravellerplan)

**103.3** CDAHerts: Central government consultation on library services. Deadline 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Details on [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-libraries-what-do-you-think](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-libraries-what-do-you-think)

**103.4** NHDC: Notification of Planning & Building Control Customer Liaison Panel Meeting, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014, 8-9.30 am, Council Offices Letchworth. Cllr Peter Long reported that he had attended.

**103.5** HCC bus services: Copy of email from Parishioner Joan Ridley to County Councillor Tony Hunter re her concerns 90/91 service. It was agreed to forward her details of the current HCC consultation. **Clerk**

**103.6** Police: Annual Report of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel 2013/14.

**103.7** Police: Email from Inspector Jason Thorne re proposals for a ‘Parish Watch’ network to link parish councils across Hertfordshire with their local Safer Neighbourhood Team and the wider Constabulary; will utilise the Online Watch Link (OWL) system.

**104. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**104.1** Forward notice of Planning Committee meeting Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 9.00am.

Case ref no. 14/00336/1 Land adjacent to Walkdens, Station Road. For Origin Housing.

Change of use of land from agricultural to residential and erection of 15 dwellings (comprising of 4 x one bedroom flats, 8 x two bedroom houses and 3 x three bedroom houses), associated access roads, parking, landscaping and ancillary works (full details available on NHDC website [www.north-herts.org](http://www.north-herts.org)).

**104.2** Notifications of decisions made by NHDC as Planning Authority.

**104.2.1** Case Ref No.13/02965/1TPO Land between Ducklake House and 19 Springhead.

Felling of 3 Sycamore trees.

NHDC decision: Conditional Consent.

**104.2.2** Case Ref No.14/00020/1TCA 15 Bacons Yard.

Reduce one Damson tree by approximately 25% to previous points.

NHDC decision: No objection.

**104.2.3** Case Ref No: 13/02925/1HH 59 High Street

Full Permission Householder: To place fifteen (15) solar panels on the garage roof of outbuilding.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

**104.2.4** Case Ref No: 13/02988/1HH Westbury Farm House, West End.

Full Permission Householder: Erection of greenhouse.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

**104.3** Correspondence on planning matters.

**104.3.1** Letter from Richard Tiffin, Area Planning Officer NHDC.

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

Full Planning Permission: Replacement two bedroom detached dwelling following

demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding. It was noted that the application had been refused by NHDC; the applicant had now appealed to the Planning Inspectorate (Ref APP/X1925/A/14/2213085).

**104.4** Request to address the Parish Council re Ashridge Farm from Mr Jeremy Pyatt, Director Alliance Planning.

It was *resolved* that Standing Orders be suspended for this item

The Chairman wished it to be noted that no formal planning application had been made to the Planning Authority, NHDC, and reminded all parish councillors that any discussions at 'pre-application' stage were subject to very strict rules designed to avoid any allegation of pre-determination or bias.

Mr Pyatt noted that his client's application for 15 affordable homes on land to the rear of 39-57 Station Road had been withdrawn following objections. The Chairman noted that the Parish Council's concerns had included problems with access and suitability of the site; he believed that these concerns still existed. The Parish Council was aware of the need for affordable homes in the village; five units were being progressed at 61 Station Road and an application for 15 units at Walkdens was shortly to be considered. It was understood that this would satisfy the housing need identified by the last survey; there was no reason to think that the situation had significantly changed. NHDC, as the housing authority, would be able to give further information. Mr Pyatt reported that his client would be willing to enter into a section 106 agreement that could financially benefit the village. The Chairman reiterated that NHDC could provide accurate information.

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

(draft minutes of meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February available; next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April)

**105.1** It was noted that items re Hertfordshire Highways had been forwarded to County Councillor Tony Hunter.

**105.2** It was noted that items re waste and recycling had been forwarded to NHDC.

**105.3** Street lighting. Cllr Mark White reported his understanding that the works agreed (white light, part night lighting, colour of columns) had been scheduled by Hertfordshire Highways within this financial year ie by the end of March.

#### **106. REPORT FROM RECREATION & FACILITIES COMMITTEE (Chairman Jane Buxton)**

(draft minutes of meeting 17<sup>th</sup> February available; next meeting scheduled for Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March)

**106.1** Parish Clock.

**106.1.1** Progress to complete the Petition for a Faculty to install a timing device. The Chairman reported that the required public consultation period would end tomorrow (6<sup>th</sup> March); he was not aware of any objections to date. The required paperwork would then be completed and sent to the Diocese; he anticipated that this would be early next week. The Parish Council had no idea when it would receive a response; it could be weeks or months.

**106.1.2** To note further correspondence.

(i) Letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> February from the environmental health officer at NHDC; this informed that they were 'broadly satisfied with the progress made to date and will not proceed with formal enforcement action at this time whilst active steps are being taken to resolve the issue'.

(ii) Email correspondence with the St Mary's PCC representative and their preferred supplier re additional electrical works required for the installation of a timer.

(iii) Email correspondence and request from representatives of the Save the Chimes group for copies of correspondence; these had been supplied.

(iv) Email correspondence with legally qualified parishioners on the likely success of any appeal and the costs thereof; earlier advice had been reiterated.

(v) Email correspondence with the Noise Abatement Society; they were not able to provide any information on similar cases.

(vi) Copies of various emails to the Rev'd Chris Ball, Oliver Heald MP, and the NHDC environmental health officer.

(vii) Further correspondence from parishioners.

**106.1.3** Parishioner request to address the Parish Council.

It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for members of the public to speak.

The Chairman expressed his wish, prior to any further debate on the matter, for all concerned to consider very carefully the consequences of holding rigidly to their present positions.

'To the complainants' – Did they really wish to delay the process and risk further alienation and unpleasantness by insisting on silencing the chimes between 6 and 7 in the morning?

'To the Save the Chimes group' – Did they really wish to risk losing the hourly strike in the night, or perhaps the clock altogether, and incur significant costs so that the chimes could continue to sound at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning?

Parishioner Martin McBeal, as a member of the Save the Chimes group, expressed his displeasure at the way in which the Parish Council and the Chairman had acted throughout this matter.

Former parishioner Maria Brown reported that the Save the Chimes group now had a formal structured committee with herself as chairman. Their fundraising activities had already achieved three quarters of their £900 interim target and showed that people were prepared to put funds towards saving the chimes; although not apparently for the installation of a timer. Funds were being used to employ the barrister who had won the Cranfield case.

Parishioner Chris Pack reported that many held the view that legal advice should be sought with a view to taking the matter to court whatever the cost.

Cllr Martin Hoffman wished it to be noted that all of the parish councillors wanted to keep the chimes but had been forced into a very difficult position. As elected members with responsibility for public money they could not take a decision that had unknown and potentially very significant costs. Other parish councillors concurred with this view. Cllr Hoffman reported that NHDC environmental health had spent a 'considerable amount' on legal advice, as can be researched on the NHDC website. It was thus highly unlikely that mistakes would be made if a noise abatement notice was issued, as had happened elsewhere. Challenging it would involve overturning the WHO recommendation which he had always considered unlikely and may risk losing everything at night. He wished to reiterate that the case won by residents to save the chimes in Cranfield had been different from that of Ashwell ('nuisance' not 'prejudice to health'); mistakes had also been made in four key aspects of the complainants' case.

Cllr Graham Lee was of the view that paying to receive the advice of the solicitor in the Cranfield case would still be of value and not as costly as the barrister (understood to charge £750 per hour); other councillors expressed concerns re the worth of this. The Parish Council's current stance that no public money should be spent on legal costs was noted. The Chairman reminded the meeting that the option of a parish poll had previously been suggested; raising funds to cover the legal costs of an appeal through a parish tax could be put to a vote. It was noted that the Annual Parish Meeting, at which a parish poll could be proposed, was scheduled for Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Cllr Graham Lee proposed that a quotation be requested from the Cranfield case solicitor for supplying the reasons why that case had been successful and, following a suitable briefing, information on the differences between that case and Ashwell's, and how this might affect the outcome for an Ashwell case.

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

The Chairman reiterated his view that the best possible solution at this stage was for both the complainants group and the Save the Chimes group to accept compromise; the timer to be installed, funded with no conditions, to silence the quarterly chimes between the hours proposed by the Parish Council.

**106.2 Recreation Ground.** Cllr Peter Long reported proposals to close part of the area to undertake grass repairs; it had become essential to address the poor state of the surface at the end nearest to the pavilion including the entrance from Lucas Lane. It was planned to cordon off this part from Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March for a week; it was hoped to keep a way through to the pavilion and playground so that they could continue to be used. He apologised for the inconvenience that this would cause and hoped people would understand the need.

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

**107.1 Springs.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that flow rates had been exceptionally high and the emergence of new springs had been noted. The far end of the path to Hodwell has been resurfaced and a good result achieved.

## **108. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(draft minutes of meeting 24<sup>th</sup> February available; next meeting scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April)

### **108.1 Report from the Finance Committee**

**108.1.1** Proposal to amend the Freedom of Information policy to allow charges to be made to cover the cost of the provision of documents.

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

**Clerk**

**108.1.2** Proposal re annual review of risk assessment policy; no changes proposed.

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

**Clerk**

**108.1.3** Proposal re Review of effectiveness of internal audit controls (including risk assessment); no changes proposed.

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

**Clerk**

**108.1.4** It was noted that the arrangements for the audit 2013-2014 would be as previously, ie all documents to the Internal Auditor and Finance Committee after the end of the financial year and formal proposal to the May Council meeting.

**Clerk**

**108.1.5** Pension provision for the Clerk. The Chairman proposed that the principle of providing a pension for the Clerk be agreed and that a new contract of employment be drafted to include this.

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

The Chairman proposed that arrangements for the current clerk be discussed *in camera* on the grounds that this was a personnel matter.

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

**108.2** Proposal for approval of March Accounts and Bills for Payment (see appendix).

It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid; item 228 re the printing of the Yearbook to be held until copies were received and agreed by the Chairman to be satisfactory. **Clerk**

## **109. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

**109.1** Neighbourhood Plan Group. Cllr Peter Long reported information from NHDC that major delays were anticipated with the District Local Plan; there were additional and considerable challenges with the Land Allocation exercise to be addressed, mainly associated with Luton. As full approval of a Neighbourhood Plan was dependant on the District Plan it was necessary to reconsider the Ashwell timetable. He proposed that there was still merit in progressing with the parish questionnaire to determine current views on matters of village importance such as parking, speeding, community assets, right to buy etc. It would not, however, be sensible to complete the planning element or to undertake a referendum until the NHDC situation was clearer.

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

**109.2** Website Group. Nothing to report.

**109.3** Yearbook Group. The Chairman reported that the 2014 edition was due from the printer this Friday. Instructions for volunteer deliverers had been issued; all households and businesses would receive their free copies by Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March. Streets & Environment Committee had requested that their leaflet with HCC and NHDC contact details be delivered simultaneously.

**109.4** Speed Watch Group. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the three fully-trained leaders had attended a briefing meeting. He reiterated his frustration that for reasons of 'bureaucracy' there was at present no action in Station Road; builders vans in Claybush Road were also currently a problem.

**109.5** Community Housing Group. Cllr Buxton reported that she and tenants of Walkdens were scheduled to meet with representatives of Origin Housing Association tomorrow (Thursday 6<sup>th</sup>). Tenants' concerns with repairs and maintenance issues would be discussed.

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

It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for members of the public to speak.

**100.1** Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr John Connolly reported that the annual notice from the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company, had been received and publicised; the deadline for applications was 14<sup>th</sup> April.

**100.2** Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the building works to improve the entrance were progressing.

**100.3** Cllr Mark White reported that there was to be a planned overnight switch-off of the mains water in West End. A resident who had problems with a flooded cellar remained of the view that the cause was a damaged water main. The exercise was to confirm the view held by others that this was not the case but most probably a result of the recent wet weather causing a raise in the water table.

**100.4** Parishioner David Sims requested further information re planning (see 104.1 above), (i) was affordable housing subject to section 106 agreements, (ii) how long was the time period before which a Housing Needs Survey should be refreshed. The Chairman responded that NHDC, as the housing authority, could give definitive answers.

**100.5** Parishioner Maureen Willatts expressed her concerns at the number of locations where cars were parked illegally and dangerously, eg opposite junctions. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that such matters should be reported direct to the police using the 101 telephone number giving as much detail as possible and preferably including a vehicle registration. She was always willing to raise issues with the PCSO if needed.

**Meeting closed at 9.40 pm**

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

Items forwarded by email

- North Herts District Council weekly ‘Members Information’
- HAPTC Briefings and Bulletins.
- NHDC Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum Newsletter

## **Appendix 2**

<b>ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -March 2014</b>				Date		<b>5th March 2014</b>	
Proposed (i) Cllr Mark White		(ii) Cllr Jane Buxton					
			£	£	£	£	£
	<b>Receipts</b>		s 106	Grants	Precept	Other	Total
111	Santander interest a/c	bank interest				2.51	2.51
112	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent				68.75	68.75
113	E H Crouch Funerals	memorial (cemetery works ref 14.03)				100.00	100.00
114-	various	yearbook				2330.00	2330.00
<i>137 and 139</i>							
138	E H Crouch Funerals	memorial (cemetery works ref 14.02)				160.00	160.00
	<b>Total</b>			0.00	0.00	2,661.26	2,661.26
<b>Committees</b>							
	<b>Payments</b>		A&O	CA	S & E	R&F	Total
	<b>By Direct Debit</b>						
208	E.ON (02/02/14)	chapel electricity				11.00	11.00
209	NHDC (01/02/14)	Trade refuse container (S&E)			90.35		90.35
210	Affinity Water (01/03/14)	water cemetery				16.05	16.05
211	Affinity Water (01/03/14)	water Small Gains				30.98	30.98
212	Affinity Water (01/03/14)	water pavilion				144.02	144.02
213	BT (04/02/14)	office phone and broadband	122.51			24.50	147.01
214	E.ON (09/02/14)	Pavilion electricity				38.96	40.91
	<b>By Cheque</b>						
215	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1,101.92				1,101.92
216	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	56.72			10.82	67.54
217	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		38.92	124.74	38.92	202.58
218	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec				60.12	60.12
219	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	260.57		50.40		310.97
220	K Clifford	Premises duties				30.00	30.00
221	The Liberty Corporation L	cleaning toilets 30/12 to 02/02				100.00	120.00
222	The Liberty Corporation L	cleaning toilets 03/02 to 02/03				80.00	96.00
223	T&J Fire	annual fire check and maintenance				117.55	141.06
224	M Fathers	tree work at Springs		405.00			405.00
225	St Mary's Ashwell PCC	donation re Village News	125.00				125.00
226	Sarabs Farm Shop	reimbursement error by bank	129.96				129.96
227	D J Granger	grounds maintenance				96.00	115.20
228	The Creative Haus	yearbook print	2865.00				2865.00
	<b>Total</b>		4,539.17	443.92		522.59	5,770.35
	<b>Outstanding Accounts</b>						
	E H Crouch Funeral Directors					1,250.00	
	Yearbook 2014 adverts					2,115.00	
	Yearbook 2013 advert (x1)					125.00	
	<b>Total</b>						3,490.00
	<b>Money at bank</b>		Date	27th February 2014			
	Current Account					36,393.23	
	Deposit Account					29,560.70	
	<b>Total</b>						65,953.93
	<i>Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after</i>						600.00
	<i>Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding</i>						310.40
	<b>Total</b>						66,243.53
	<i>Total after paying this months cheques</i>						60,473.18
	<i>Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques</i>						30,912.48