

**Minutes of a meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 5th November 2014 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Jane Buxton, Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, David Short, David Sims, Bridget Macey, Daniel Mathews.

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

The death of Parish Councillor Peter Long was marked by a minute's silence. The Chairman wished to acknowledge the significant contribution that he had made during his time on the Parish Council including his role as Chairman. It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to his widow.

73. APOLOGIES Cllrs Mike Berry (other commitment), John Connolly (away on business), Martin Hoffman (medical matter).

74. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 1st October 2014 It was *resolved* that the minutes be approved and signed.

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

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.'). To note that the public apology for offensive comments made on Facebook was not received at the October Council meeting.

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 *resolved* that the Parish Council would seek legal advice as to other avenues it could pursue to obtain the promised apology.

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

75.2 (October Council, 64.2) Three new parish councillors (i) it was noted that declarations for the Register of Interests had been sent to the Monitoring Officer at NHDC and made available on the website, (ii) responsibilities for new parish councillors were considered and committee appointments made.

75.3 (October Council, 64.3) Parish Clock.

An update on the proposed overnight volume reducing device for the quarter chimes was received,

(i) Faculty: notification had now been received from the Diocese that a variation of the existing faculty would be required. Information requested had been sent to the Diocese and the formal public consultation notice to be placed on the Church door was awaited. There would also need to be a formal proposal from the PCC in support; this was in hand. **Clerk**

(ii) Funding: following the request to the Save the Chimes group for information a letter had been received from Mrs Sylvia McBeal, Treasurer, 'Save the Chimes now closed and the re-opened group of Save Ashwell Church Chimes'. Further information had been requested; a response with accounts and a financial statement had been received from the individual who had managed the accounts on behalf of the original group. It was agreed that these would be forwarded to the Internal Auditor and considered by the Finance Committee at its forthcoming meeting. **Clerk**

75.4 (October Council, 64.4) HCC consultation on review of county council funded bus services (www.hertsdirect.org/busconsult). Cllr Daniel Mathews presented an update on recent actions re the threats to Ashwell services. A press release timed to coincide with the HCC meeting had resulted in further good publicity in the Royston Crow and the Comet; the Chairman commended him for this. Parishioner Joan Ridley was also applauded for her efforts. Cllr Mathews reported that there had been a HCC meeting the previous day; he was not yet aware of the outcome.

75.5 (October Council, 72.5) Concerns re the Bushel & Strike advertising sandwich board that had been chained to a lighting column in the High Street. The Chairman reported that, following complaints from both the Parish Council and parishioners, an HCC officer had attended; the sign had now been removed.

It was agreed that similar action should be taken for any other problem signage. **S&E Committee**

75.6 North Herts Parish and Town Conference, 22nd October. Cllrs Bridget Macey and David Short reported that they had attended. Cllr Short reported that information had been presented on (i) the District Local Plan, including the timetable, (ii) the Kimpton volunteer group called 'the bench working party' who carried out valuable practical tasks for their community, (iii) grants available; he felt that Ashwell took good advantage of these. Cllr Macey reported that the Police & Crime Commissioner had made a presentation; she had questioned him on (i) reintroducing the police item in *Ashwell Village News*, (ii) the speed management strategy. She expressed concern that her questions had not been adequately answered.

76. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED TO BE NOTED

(Items not covered elsewhere in agenda)

76.1 Email from HCC with notes from Parish and Town Conference held on 16th October.

76.2 Information from HCC on 'Inspiring Libraries', a new 10-year strategy for the Hertfordshire Library Services. It was reported that an email had been received from Parishioner Anne Reddaway expressing her concerns at the proposal to remove the mobile library service completely. Cllrs Madeleine Legg and David Sims agreed to coordinate further action and encourage parishioners to respond to the consultation. It was agreed to request the usage data for the Ashwell service and formulate a response from the Parish Council.

(See also from Parishioner Eileen ten Hove, 83.2.1 below)

MFL/DRS/Clerk

76.3 Email from Herts Highways re 'Highways Together' projects currently being piloted by various Parish and Town Councils that enable them to undertake work on the highway. Invitation to risk assessment briefing provided by Ringway for those wishing to participate. The Chairman reported that it was important not to be excluded from this project at this stage although whether, and in what way, it was agreed to participate had yet to be decided. It was agreed that the Streets & Environment Committee would send a representative.

S&E Committee

76.4 Email from Ashwell School PTA informing that their annual Bonfire and Fireworks display would be held on November 8th at the Ashwell Cycle Club Track field, using the entrance to Ashwell Tennis Club. Cllr David Short reported that he had spoken to the vice-chairman of the PTA. He had been assured that the PTA was well aware of the Parish Council's concerns and its request that the event be well-stewarded.

76.5 Copy of a letter from a parishioner to the supplier, Affinity Water, re inadequate pressure in Claybush Road. It was noted that the water pressure problem in this area had existed for many years and, despite much effort by individual parishioners, had not been satisfactorily resolved. There was also concern that the proposed additional housing would exacerbate supply problems. It was agreed to write to Affinity Water requesting relevant monitoring data. Following receipt of this, the matter would be taken up with OFWAT and copied to Oliver Heald, MP.

Clerk

76.6 Letter from Mrs Jill Powell on behalf of the Ashwell Branch of the Royal British Legion re the War Memorial. It was agreed to respond informing that the request for cleaning of the stonework and pruning of the beech trees would be progressed by the Recreation & Facilities Committee.

Clerk/R&F Committee

76.7 Email from a parishioner with a request that the police be asked to take action re pavement parking. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had responded to the parishioner and progressed this with PCSO Chris Brabrook. He encouraged parishioners to report repeat offenders via the 101 telephone number, giving full details of the vehicle involved; he would then be able to take action.

77. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

77.1 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)

77.1.1 Case Ref No: 14/02500/1HH 23 Lucas Lane

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing structure.

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

77.1.2 Case Ref No: 14/02691/1HH 27 Angells Meadow

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension

Cllr David Short expressed his view that this seemed to be quite a significant extension; the impact on neighbouring properties could be of concern. It was agreed that the matter be considered by the Planning Committee on Sunday 16th November.

Clerk

77.2 Correspondence re planning matters

77.2.1 (October Council 66.2.4.2) Response from Planning Officer to concerns re 30 West End (Case Ref 14/02267/1) were noted.

77.2.2 District Local Plan/Draft Housing Allocations (i) Press release and draft allocated housing sites from NHDC (see appendix 3), (ii) copies of correspondence from other parishes and District Councillor Andrew Young, (iii) correspondence from Ashwell parishioners.

It was agreed that clarification was essential. Land allocation for housing would form part of the Local Plan that the District Council was required to do by central government. The total number of new houses

required across the whole district was also set by central government. This was a land allocation exercise and not a planning application; planning permissions would still have to be applied for in the usual way. Potential sites for housing that had been put forward by landowners had to be considered by the District Council who assessed them for their suitability for housing development; sites deemed to be suitable were then prioritised (Priority 1 highest, Priority 3 lowest). One site had been identified for Ashwell at Claybush Hill; this was a Priority 3 site for 33 dwellings (see appendix 3).

It was noted that the draft proposals for housing land allocation across the whole district would go out for public consultation during December and January.

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

Parishioners reported their concerns and objections to the proposals that they felt would have an adverse impact on the village. Specific concerns included,

- adverse impact on the landscape. It was noted that the Claybush Hill site fell within the area identified by successive Landscape Character Assessments (the latest dated 2012) as being of high value and unsuitable for development. This had been a key point in two refusals of planning permission that had gone to appeal at national level.
http://www.northherts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_project-s-2/evidence_base/landscape_character_assessment.htm
- adverse impact of one large development. This was contrary to the *Ashwell Village Design Statement* that recognised the preference for small scale, gradual development that would be more easily absorbed into the social and built environment of the community. The view was expressed that alternative, multiple small sites could be identified.
- adverse impact on the school, roads, water and sewage infrastructure.

The need for greater influence on the type of dwellings built, as well as where, was also expressed.

Parishioners proposed various courses of action to respond to the proposals.

The advice to the Parish Council for gaining greater control of planning matters through a Neighbourhood Plan was noted (see 77.2.3 below).

Standing Orders reinstated.

It was **resolved** that the Neighbourhood Plan group co-ordinate actions and responses to the consultation including publicity and public engagement via meetings/workshops. A statement would be issued giving facts and contact details for parishioners to make their views known. **Neighbourhood Plan Group**

77.2.3 (October Council 66.3) Response from Oliver Heald, MP, re the influence of parish councils on planning matters. The advice given had been that a Neighbourhood Plan was the most appropriate route.

77.2.4 Case Ref No: 14/02611/1 Land Adjacent to Ashridge Farm/rear 39-59 Station Road. It was noted that further correspondence had been received from parishioners objecting to the proposals. It was noted that the application was scheduled to be considered by the NHDC Planning Control Committee on 16th December. It was agreed that the Parish Council would request the opportunity to make a representation to the meeting.

Clerk

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

(draft minutes of meeting 24th September available, next meeting Wednesday 19th November)

78.1 Valued verges working party. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had been involved with the recent works at the Hinxworth junction; the group had been pleased with what had been achieved.

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

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

79.1 Vandalism at the Pavilion. Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that significant damage had been caused that would cost a considerable sum to repair. The police had carried out house-to-house investigations but there had, to date, been no success in identifying the offenders.

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

It was noted that Cllr Hoffman had submitted the following reports,

80.1 The Springs.

80.1.1 Working party dates. Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th November from 10am and/or 2 pm.

Co-ordinated by co-opted committee member Martin Lush. Volunteers welcome.

80.1.2 Tree survey. An update to the current management plan had been commissioned.

80.2 St Mary's Churchyard. Cllr Martin Hoffman had circulated a written report following the meeting with members of the Church held to discuss maintenance responsibilities. It had been noted that any financial implications were to be discussed further at the Finance Committee meeting. Cllr Hoffman

wished it to be noted that he had emphasized that the Parish Council's input was limited/defined and was not an 'open chequebook'.

81. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(next meeting Wednesday 12th November)

81.1 Letter from NHDC with the timetable for receipt of parish taxbase information, invitation to a briefing meeting on 12th January and deadline of 23rd January for submission of precept information.

81.2 It was noted that the budget for 2015-16 and the setting of the precept was to be considered by the Finance Committee and proposed to the December Council meeting.

81.3 Proposal for approval of Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

Clerk

82. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

82.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the group was progressing with plans for publicity and parishioner engagement. (See also 77.2.2 above)

82.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Daniel Mathews) Cllr Daniel Mathews reported that the main challenge for progressing the new website was the resources required to add the content.

82.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the group was progressing well with plans for the 2015 edition. He requested that all parish councillors who contributed reports note the deadline of Monday 24th November for submission.

MNW/MWB/DMM/MGH/Clerk

82.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) A report from Cllr Hoffman was noted; the training session on the new police software had now been arranged for 26th November and members would attend.

82.5 Church clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had written to Oliver Heald, MP, requesting details of the acts by which clocks including Big Ben and at York Minster were excluded. A response had been received informing that this would be investigated.

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

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

83.1.1 Police matters. See 75.6, 76.7, 79.1.

83.1.2 Ashwell School Governing Body. Cllr David Short reported that arrangements for recruiting a new headteacher to take up the position in September 2015 were being progressed.

83.1.3 Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr David Short reported that the trustees were to submit an item for inclusion in the 2015 edition of the Yearbook.

83.1.4 Youth matters. Cllr Jane Buxton proposed that Cllr John Connolly be requested to present his proposals for encouraging youth involvement. This was agreed.

JC

83.1.5 Herts Highways works planned in Station Road. Cllr Jane Buxton reported that, as a resident of Station Road, she had received a letter from Herts Highways informing her of the necessary road closure. She had expressed her concerns to County Councillor Tony Hunter re the worth of undertaking resurfacing works when there were two major developments progressing in Station Road. It was noted that the same concerns had been expressed to County Councillor Tony Hunter at a Highways meeting by Streets & Environment Committee members in June; the County Councillor had agreed to investigate and reconsider.

83.2 Items raised by parishioners.

83.2.1 HCC proposals to withdraw completely the mobile library service. Parishioner Eileen ten Hove wished to emphasize the value of the service to particular sections of the community. Although a home book service had been proposed as a substitute she felt that this was missing the point; the social contact provided was of great significance to many users. (See also 76.2 above)

Meeting closed at 10.20pm

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.

Appendix 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 3JF



PRESS RELEASE

PR2623

16 October 2014

Draft housing allocations unveiled for North Hertfordshire Local Plan

The emerging preferred options for the allocation of land for housing in North Hertfordshire were presented at a Councillor briefing last night (15).

The draft housing allocations were discussed in advance of a Full Council meeting on 27 November, when Councillors will be asked to agree for consultation on a draft Local Plan - Preferred Options, for the period 2011-2031. Consultation would then be held during December and January where comments will be welcomed from the public, interest groups and potential developers. The results of the consultation will be used to prepare the final version of the Draft Local Plan to be put forward, following a further consultation, for examination by the Planning Inspectorate next year.

The draft plan will include 12,100 homes for North Hertfordshire's needs over the period to 2031. It will also consider how we respond to the needs from the Luton area that cannot be met within Luton's borders, which we are required to do under the National Planning Policy Framework.

The plan will identify sites for housing and employment across each of North Hertfordshire's towns and villages. It will also contain a new suite of policies to be used when determining planning applications.

The majority of new development will be focused around North Hertfordshire's towns, to make maximum use of existing facilities, social networks and infrastructure. As some of the sites proposed will be substantial new communities, the Council will prepare masterplans for those sites. The masterplans will consider the infrastructure and facilities necessary to support the development, opportunities to provide employment, and incorporation of open spaces.

Cllr David Levett, NHDC's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise said: "We need new homes in North Hertfordshire to meet the needs of our growing population, to ensure the district's economic prosperity and that our families have somewhere to live. However those homes must be sustainable, viable, and deliverable and also ensure that the unique nature of North Hertfordshire, which makes it one of the best places to live in the country, is protected.

"We have given careful consideration to the proposed sites and want to reassure people that all sites will be suitably planned with the accompanying infrastructure and local amenities necessary to create thriving communities, particularly in the case of the major sites which will each require a masterplan to ensure these are delivered.

"Following the meeting of Full Council on 27 November, we will be seeking the views of the public on the draft Local Plan – Preferred Options, and we would encourage everyone to have their say."

Draft allocated key housing sites and estimated dwellings (inclusive of completions since 2011 and permissions at 1 April 2014) for North Hertfordshire

- **Baldock** – Nine sites have been allocated in and around Baldock, including one of 2,800 dwellings at the Blackhorse Farm site, north of the town. The estimated total number of dwellings for the plan period is 3,591. A masterplan for the Blackhorse Farm site will be prepared to include the provision of a new road and pedestrian bridge across the railway, adequate new schools including a secondary school and a new neighbourhood centre.
- **Great Ashby and North East of Stevenage** – Two sites are allocated for an estimated 857 additional dwellings.
- **Hitchin** – Nine sites are allocated in and around Hitchin. The town is estimated to see 1,342 additional dwellings over the plan period. The largest site is for 484 dwellings on land at Highover Farm. **The Priory Fields site is not included in the allocated sites.**
- **Letchworth Garden City** – 11 sites are allocated in Letchworth, the largest of which being land north of Letchworth with an estimated 1,000 dwellings. The total number of dwellings to be delivered is estimated to be 2,030. A masterplan will be prepared for the site north of Letchworth .
- **Royston** – Eight sites are allocated in Royston with the total number of dwellings estimated at 1,485.
- **Stevenage North** – One site on undeveloped farm land in the parish of Graveley is allocated as a housing site with an estimated 1,000 dwellings. A masterplan will be prepared for the site jointly with Stevenage Borough Council, which controls the adjoining land in the South.

National Planning Policy Framework Duty to Cooperate on Unmet Need

- **Cockernhoe and East of Luton** – Three sites have been identified for up to 2,103 dwellings for this area, to meet possible needs arising from Luton rather than North Hertfordshire. A masterplan will be prepared for all three sites to consider issues such as minimising visual impacts of development, access into Luton, adequate new schools, a new neighbourhood centre and ensure any development meets Luton's specific needs.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Please see accompanying table for details of draft housing sites and estimated dwellings across North Hertfordshire.

Further Information

For further information contact Sarah Dobor on 01462 474552 or sarah.dobor@north-herts.gov.uk

DRAFT allocated housing sites – North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Area	Number of allocated housing sites	Estimated additional dwellings at allocated sites	Completions since 2011 and permissions at April 2014	Total dwellings 2011-2031
Ashwell	1	33	36	69
Baldock	9	3414	177	3591
Barkway	2	31	18	49
Codicote	3	179	41	220
Graveley	1	8	7	15
Great Ashby and North East of Stevenage	2	857	0	857
Hinxworth	0	0	2	2
Hitchin	9	770	400 plus 172 small sites allowance	1342
Holwell	0	0	5	5
Ickleford	2	57	3	60
Kelshall	0	0	2	2
Kimpton	3	96	6 completions -8 permissions	94
King's Walden	1	16	2 completions -1 permissions	17
Knebworth	2	411	22	433
Letchworth Garden City	11	1537	321 plus 172 small sites allowance	2030
Offley	1	62	10	72
Pirton	2	135	7	142
Preston	1	20	16	36
Reed	2	31	0	31
Royston	8	973	428 plus 84 small sites allowance	1485
Sandon	0	0	8	8
St Ippolyts	2	96	19	115
St Paul's Walden	1	44	6	50
Stevenage North	1	1000	0	1000
Therfield	2	38	3	41
Weston	1	25	3	28
Wymondley	1	300	13	313