

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 7th October 2015 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman), Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, Bridget Macey, David Short.

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

48. Apologies Cllr David Sims (away on holiday).

49. Minutes of Council meeting 2nd September 2015

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

50. Matters of report

50.1 (September Council, 42.2) Parish Clock. It was noted that a response had been received from Andrew Godman, NHDC Head of Housing and Public Protection, ‘...to undertake another site visit to determine whether the new configuration achieves the desired outcome.’ The Chairman reported that the planned visit by the NHDC officer was imminent; the outcome of the measures implemented to reduce the overnight volume of the quarterly chimes would then be known. Until the overnight sound levels could be set to below the required limit the chimes would remain off as the threat of a Noise Abatement Notice remained. The request from a complainant for a meeting with the Parish Council was noted; he had been informed that this would be arranged pending receipt of the latest information from NHDC. In response to a question from a member of the public during the Open Forum (see item 56.2), it was reiterated that should access to a property be refused, the NHDC officer had informed that a standard procedure would be applied whereby adjustments were made to external sound readings.

50.2 (September Council, 42.3) Royal Mail Post Boxes. It was noted that no further formal information had been received. Discussions were still ongoing at national level; it was likely that there would be changes to the collection times currently displayed but there would be no reduction in the number of post boxes. It was understood that collections from post boxes were to be undertaken by the delivery postmen during their rounds. There would also be one post box, believed to be that in the High Street outside the old post office, that would have an additional late afternoon/early evening collection.

50.3 (September Council, 44.3) Library services. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported on behalf of Cllr David Sims and herself. Following the cancellation of the mobile library service, various options had been investigated. She was pleased to announce that St Mary’s Church had kindly made available the Parish Room for a book swapping scheme where people could exchange books. This would be open during the same hours as the post office services. Full details would be publicised in the *Ashwell Village News* and elsewhere.

MFL/Clerk

50.4 Parking problems. Requests made by the Parish Council following reports from parishioners were noted, (i) Station Road adjacent to the Cemetery causing damage to the verge. The PCSO had spoken to the owner of the vehicle; it was agreed to request that Herts Highways install wooden posts to prevent damage to the grass verge, (ii) Back Street where access of dustcart obstructed. The PCSO had spoken to the owners of the vehicles concerned, (iii) junction Back Street/Bear Lane where large vehicles forced to reverse as access impeded. Request to commercial premises in Bygrave, via District Councillor Janine Paterson, re alternative routes for large vehicles.

In response to a question from a member of the public during the Open Forum (see item 56.2), further problems outside the school were discussed. The use of the yellow notices endorsed by the police for placing on windscreens was encouraged; supplies were available for members of the public to use so long as caution re personal safety was ensured. It was agreed to request further police presence outside the school at appropriate times.

BM/Clerk

50.5 Social/affordable housing. North Herts Homes (NHH) annual estate inspection. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had attended as had local police officers and some tenants. There had been no serious issues raised by tenants but various minor matters had been discussed. She felt it had been useful. Following the visit NHH had supplied information giving numbers and locations of their properties in the village.

51. Parish management reports

(Routine matters concerning the management of parish assets and amenities are usually not discussed or reported to full council meetings; some are dealt with by the Management Committee, others directly by parish councillors and/or the Clerk)

(Management Committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday October 21st, 8pm)

51.1 (September Council, 42.5) Public toilets at the Recreation Ground/additional cleaning. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the facilities were much improved; although now acceptably clean they were in need of refurbishment. Future cleaning schedules would be discussed at the management meeting on 21st October.

51.2 War Memorial. It was noted that (i) quotations for cleaning had been requested from various suppliers, (ii) works this autumn/winter for refurbishment of the perimeter hedge had been agreed in principle but a date was to be finalised, (iii) research into the inscriptions was ongoing by the Museum and any agreed works were pending. The Ashwell Branch of the Royal British Legion and other interested parties had been kept informed. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a Museum meeting was upcoming; he would report further following this.

51.3 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that, following agreement by County Councillor Tony Hunter to fund repainting of the Highways railings from his budget, quotations were to be obtained.

The most recent daily flow rates reported by the Environment Agency were lower than in previous months but still above an acceptable level; they would continue to be monitored.

Clerk

51.4 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a meeting with PCC representatives was scheduled for next week.

51.5 Small Gains. It was noted that an email had been received from a farmer re access to his land down Small Gains Lane; he had raised concerns re overgrown hedges. Following liaison with other adjacent landowners and tenants it had been determined that there were no concerns re there being sufficient access for emergency vehicles although there was possibly not space for very large agricultural vehicles. It was noted that the Accies had recently undertaken works to clear back the perimeter of their sports field. It was agreed that a response be given informing that the farmer was welcome to cut back any overhanging branches along the lane but the Parish Council did not feel it appropriate to offer any contribution from public funds.

The farmer had also raised concerns that members of the public were crossing his land to gain access to Ashwell Street; this was not a right of way. It was agreed that installation of appropriate signage be suggested to him.

Clerk

51.6 The Cemetery. It was noted that the professional tree survey had now been received. Recommended works had been agreed and were being progressed.

Items from other authorities

52. Matters re Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) including Hertfordshire Highways.

52.1 (September Council, 42.1) From HCC/Superfast Broadband. It was noted that Ashwell was to be included in the Extension Programme whereby 98% premises were set to be covered by December 2017; additional information had suggested that the programme was now to be accelerated.

Details available on www.connectedcounties.org

During the Open Forum (item 56.2) a member of the public reported that available speeds had improved considerably following a recent upgrade.

52.2 (August Council, 33.3) HCC/Bus services 90/91 and 202 (taxibus). Ongoing concerns re the reliability of services were noted. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had been in contact with the operator of the 90/91 service, Richmonds, and had received assurances that options for timetable amendments to ensure buses arrived in time to allow train connections were being investigated. It was reported that proposals for timetable changes from Parishioner Joan Ridley had been forwarded to HCC and were being considered.

52.3 From HCC/Open letter to Govia Thameslink Railway, 'Unreliable train service is an unnecessary cause of stress for Hertfordshire residents'. This was noted.

52.4 From HCC/Invitation to Hertfordshire Parish and Town Council Conference, Thursday 5th November 2015. The Oak Room, Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage, 13.30 -16.30. This was noted.

52.5 From HCC/VisitHerts launch of new Destination Management Service 'to strengthen Hertfordshire's tourism.' Further information from enquiries@visitherts.co.uk. Cllr David Short reported that tourism was one of the topics being covered by the Neighbourhood Plan group.

52.6 From HCC/Consultation on Minerals Local Plan. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/mineralslocalplan. Deadline for response 16th October 2015. This was noted.

52.7 Re Herts Highways.

52.7.1 (September Council, 42.4) HCC/Overhanging vegetation. Outstanding works agreed by Herts Highways to Bear Lane school verge and elsewhere. Cllr David Short expressed his concerns at the continued delays and confusion re the agreed works adjacent to the school; he would continue to chase this with HCC and would again involve Sir Oliver Heald, MP, if he thought necessary. As the works would

involve a road closure he would request the dates from HCC. With regard to the overgrown hedges in Cow Lane it was noted that Herts Highways had agreed that they were responsible; this would again be followed up with County Councillor Tony Hunter.

CDS/Clerk

52.7.2 (September Council, 48.1.1) A505 Odsey junction. It was noted that works agreed by Herts Highways to improve safety were outstanding. The Chairman reported that he was to attend a meeting with Steeple Morden Parish Council, at their request, at which safety issues were to be discussed further. **MNW**

52.7.3 (September Council, 48.1.1) Weedkilling. It was noted that Herts Highways contractors had been observed spraying weeds on the footways in the High Street on Saturday morning. Concerns were raised that there had been many pedestrians in close proximity; there had been no warning signage and the operatives had no distinctive/protective clothing. It was agreed that details of the works undertaken be requested via County Councillor Tony Hunter.

Clerk

52.7.4 (August Council, 33.4.1) Flooding in Northfields Road. It was noted that works agreed by Herts Highways were still outstanding; a resident had again written to County Councillor Tony Hunter and Oliver Heald, MP, requesting prompt action.

52.7.5 (September Council, 44.4) Street lighting LED Phase 2 roll-out. It was noted that this phase only covered lights on roads and footways that were in full night lighting; almost all Ashwell's lights were now part-night. Some footway conversions would be undertaken between April 2016 and January 2017; it was noted that conversion of Ashwell's increasingly aged columns might be problematic, and hence expensive, and result in further delays.

52.7.6 River Rhee/parishioners' concerns re silting/low flow rates at bridge and culvert in Mill Street. It was noted that a request had been made to HCC, as the authority responsible for ensuring the culvert was kept clear, for information/action.

Clerk

52.7.7 From Herts Highways/road closure Bear Lane. 'Notice is given that owing to the likelihood of danger to the public whilst repair works to a garage situated on a property adjoining the highway are being undertaken'. This was noted.

52.7.8 From Herts Highways/road closure Kingsland Way, 'to enable utility service works to take place'. This was noted.

52.7.9 From HCC/press release, 'Summer's highways maintenance blitz for Hertfordshire's roads.' It was noted that there had been little evidence of this in Ashwell and agreed to question County Councillor Tony Hunter re the lack of progress on agreed but outstanding items.

Clerk

52.7.10 From HCC/press release, 'Hertfordshire's gritters gear up for action'. It was noted that requests were outstanding for a minor extension to the salting route to include the junction outside the school and additional grit bins to cover the steep gradient of the twitchel from Ashwell Street/Dixies Close/Back Street.

52.7.11 From HCC/completion of 'the traffic sensitive streets consultation in accordance with Section 64 of NRSWA 1991, Traffic Management Act 2004 and the Street Works (Registers, Notices, Directions and Designations) (England) Regulations 2007. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/highways/hhonlineservices/nrswa/tssr/. This was noted.

52.8 From NHDC/Invitation to Planning and Building Control Customer Liaison Panel, Council Offices Letchworth, Thursday 19 November 2015. Cllr David Short reported that he had attended in the past but was unavailable on this occasion.

52.9 From Royston Community Health/ 'working with the NHS to ensure optimal health and social services for the people of the area...would like to hear the views people from the villages.' Further information on www.roystoncommunityhealth.org.uk. This was noted.

52.10 Rights of Way. Cllr David Short reported that, following further concerns from a parishioner re the Station Road to Ashwell Street byway, he had spoken with the HCC officer. HCC had installed some signage intended to deter off-road vehicles from causing damage.

Cllr Short also reported that he would progress an application for a Parish Paths Partnership (P3) grant.

CDS

53. Reports re planning matters.

53.1 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)

53.1.1 (Planning Committee, 27 Sept 2015, item 11) The recommendation for approval was noted re NHDC Case Ref No: 15/02116/1 Ashwell Post Office, 17 High Street. Full Planning Permission: Change

of use of former Post Office and shop to residential in association with existing dwelling. Single storey rear extension and first floor rear extension and additional first floor window in side (east) elevation.

53.2 Decisions on applications by NHDC as Planning Authority The following were noted.

53.2.1 NHDC Approval. Case Ref 15/01931/1DOC Land adjacent Walkdens. Condition 15 –Hard & Soft landscaping. (Parish Council not a consultee).

Cllr David Short reported re concerns that the heights of the buildings were greater than approved. This had been pursued via District Councillor Janine Paterson. It had been determined that the roof pitches had been altered from the original proposals; this would result in a property being 30cm higher than the plans. He understood that NHDC were not to raise any objections to this.

53.2.2 NHDC Certificate granted. Case ref 15/02011/1PLB 12 Swan Street. Replace 5 no. windows and doorcase pillasters on front elevation like for like. Repair rear kitchen window. (Parish Council not a consultee).

53.2.3 NHDC Refused. Case Ref No: 15/01712/1. 18 Newnham Way

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated parking and amenity space at the rear of 18 Newnham Way (Arbury House) including alterations to existing access drive.

(Parish Council recommendation for refusal; Planning Committee 05 August 2015, item 6)

53.2.4 NHDC Conditional Permission. Case Ref No: 15/01749/1HH. The Engine, 50 Back Street

Full Planning Permission Householder: Two and first floor rear extension with canopy to create rear main entrance and stairwell. First floor rear extension.

(Parish Council recommendation for approval; Planning Committee 05 August 2015, item 7)

53.2.5 NHDC Standard Conditional Permission Case Ref No: 15/01913/1HH. 109 High Street

Full Planning Permission Householder: Garage conversion to create study.

Applicant: Rev Robert Evens.

(Parish Council recommendation for approval; Planning Committee 05 August 2015, item 10)

53.3 ‘Tree(s) in Conservation Area’ applications to NHDC as Planning Authority

(Parish Council is not a statutory consultee but requests that planning officers consult)

53.3.1 NHDC No Objection. Case Ref 15/02028/1TCA St Mary’s Church and Rectory, Hodwell. Reduce crown and balance by 30% to one Holm Oak tree and reduce one Holm Oak tree by 2m from building.

Applicant: Mr D Richards.

53.3.2 NHDC No Objection. Case Ref 15/01858/1TCA 4 Lucas Lane. Reduce one Weeping Willow by 28%. Applicant: Evans.

53.3.3 Tree works at Broadchalke Close. Concerns had been received from a number of parishioners following the removal of one Ash tree and the pollarding of another. The location was not in the Conservation Area and no Tree Protection Orders were in place but it was believed that the planning permission for the development had required protection and retention. Contact with the NHDC Planning Officer had determined that an application had been made and permission given for the works. It was understood that some damage to the roots may have occurred during the building works and subsequent concerns resulted in the application for works.

Cllr David Short reported that the natural environment, including trees, was one of the topics being covered by the Neighbourhood Plan group.

54. Reports re Finance matters.

54.1 Submission of the annual bid to the NHDC Rural Fund/Environmental Enhancement was noted.

54.2 Audit 2014-15. Receipt of the Annual Return and completion from the External Auditor was noted; only one minor issue had been highlighted.

54.3 Insurance. Acknowledgement of the annual renewal was noted; the Employer’s Liability Certificate had been received and publicised as required. It was agreed that property valuations be refreshed prior to the next renewal.

Clerk

54.4 Training. It was noted that Cllr David Short had attended the HAPTC courses ‘Responding to Planning Applications’ and ‘Use of mapping’ . The Chairman reported that he was to attend a course on ‘The Council as an Employer’ in November.

54.5 Cricket Club request. It was noted that a request had been received from the Cricket Club for funding for a new mower. It was agreed to clarify with them the basis of section 106 funding. This was funding from specific developments held by the District Council. Strict rules existed and it would only be released

by NHDC for specific capital items in approved categories. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had taken expert advice and proposed that the Parish Council support an application for s106 funds as described.

It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted and a bid for funding put together by the Cricket Club and the Parish Council.

Clerk

54.6 Monthly accounts. Payment item 120 to LGS Services for locum clerk holiday cover was discussed. Some councillors felt that the charge was expensive for the service provided. It was agreed that other arrangements would be pursued although this service would remain an option if necessary. The Chairman reported that discussions with other village groups re possible shared personnel would continue and he would report back on this.

MNW

Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

Clerk

55. Reports from working groups

55.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the publication of the housing survey results was pending. He also reported that he had recently be made aware of surveys titled 'Getting to know your parish' carried out by the Church of England. These gave very detailed information; that for Ashwell was available on www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/320082-Ashwell.pdf

(See also 52.5 and 53.3.3)

55.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had circulated proposals. It was agreed that these should be progressed.

55.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the group was progressing the next edition.

55.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that groups in other villages had ceased to function. He proposed that police representatives be invited to attend a parish Council meeting; this was agreed.

Clerk

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

This item taken at 8.30pm. Standing Orders suspended for members of the public to speak.

56.1.1 Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey noted matters from the latest Rural News published by the local officers.

56.1.2 Moss Cottages. Cllr Madeleine Legg (trustee) reported that a vacancy was shortly to be advertised.

56.1.3 Ashwell School Governing Body. Cllr David Short (governor) reported that the new head was settling in well.

56.1.4 Village Hall. The Chairman reported that he would attend the meeting next week to represent the Parish Council. Views had been sought on a new notice board to replace that adjacent to the entrance.

56.1.5 Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman (trustee) reported that the next meeting was scheduled for 21st October.

52.10 Rights of Way. Cllr Graham Lee raised concerns re speeding vehicles along the Ruddery. He felt with new housing in Station Road this presented an increasing hazard for pedestrians particularly children using this route to walk to school. It was noted that as this was a BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic), no physical barriers to prevent vehicular access would be permitted; there were also legitimate users. Cllr David Short felt that the rough surface acted as a calming measure. Cllr Short reported that, following further concerns from a parishioner re the Station Road to Ashwell Street shire balk, he had spoken with the HCC officer. HCC had installed some signage intended to deter off-road vehicles from causing damage.

Cllr Short also reported that he would progress an application for a Parish Paths Partnership (P3) grant.

CDS

56.2 Accies Football Club. A club representative reported that next year there would be an under 15 team that would require a full size pitch; use of the pitch at the Recreation Ground was requested. The Chairman responded that the success of the club was applauded and the request would certainly be looked into; there had been concerns re the wear and tear on the surface if too many games were played. It was also reported that the surface of the car park at Small Gains was increasingly uneven and a request was made for permission to remedy this by the addition of some hard-core. It was agreed that there was no objection in principle but details of the material to be used were requested; it had been a condition, should it be necessary, that the area could be returned to allotment use by stripping off the surfacing.

56.3 Cricket Club. The Chairman reported his disappointment that, despite requests over several months and the club's agreement to do so, the alcohol associated with the bar in the pavilion had not been removed. Club representatives present apologised; this had been due to a breakdown in communications. It was reiterated that whilst the Parish Council was aware, and in principle supportive, of the club's objective to positively engage with community events, the concerns re security remained. It was agreed that the bar structure could remain pending further discussion but that the pumps be removed immediately.

It was agreed that a further meeting be arranged including representatives from all the sports clubs to discuss the use of village facilities and in particular the future management of the pavilion and the Recreation Ground.

MNW/MFL/Clerk

56.4 Items also raised by parishioners included matters re the Parish Clock (see 50.1), parking problems (see 50.4) and broadband (see 52.1).

Meeting closed to the public at 9.40 for an *in camera* item (57)

Standing Order item 62.

That in view of the special nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

Item to be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that includes personnel matters.

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 4th November, 8pm in the Parish Room.

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 OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins.

Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -October 2015		Date	7th October 2015	
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman (ii) Cllr Short		Declarations: None		
		£	£	£
		Precept	Grants	Other
				Total
Receipts				
57	Santander interest a/c bank interest			11.58
58	Neville Funeral Service chapel rent Sept			68.75
59	NHDC precept 2nd installment	26,000.00		26,000.00
60	E H Crouch interment fee (cemetery works 15.30)			100.00
61	Neville Funeral Service chapel rent Oct			68.75
	Total		0.00	26,237.50
				26,237.50
		Admin, staff costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT
				Total
	By Direct Debit			
111	E.ON (01/09/15) chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
112	E.ON (01/10/15) chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
113	E.ON (23/09/15) Pavilion electricity		16.35	16.35
	By Cheque			
114	J C M Porter Clerk's salary	1083.11		1083.11
115	HCC Pensions-LGPS Acco clerk's pension	398.00		398.00
116	M Barden Environmental Cleansing	202.58		202.58
117	M Chandler Duties at Pavilion and Rec	57.32		57.32
118	Post Office tax&NI to Inland Revenue	284.05		284.05
119	K Clifford Premises duties		174.98	4.99
120	LGS Services Holiday cover 21/08 -06/09	658.85		131.77
121	HAPTC training course (Use of Mapping)	45.00		45.00
122	HAPTC training course (Planning Applications)	45.00		45.00
123	BDO LLP Exernal audit fee 2014-15	330.00		66.00
124	Liberty Co Ltd toilets cleaning (03/08-30/08)		80.00	16.00
125	British Gas electricity toilets		61.06	3.05
126	D J Granger grounds maintenance sheet 14		274.00	66.60
127	D J Granger grounds maintenance sheet 15		352.00	76.80
128	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd rec pitch mowing (13/07,27/07,10/08,24/08)		116.28	23.26
129	CPM Playgrounds Ltd playground works		185.00	37.00
130	Liberty Co Ltd toilets cleaning (31/08-04/10)		100.00	20.00
131	Ashwell Village Sports replacement lost cheque line 34 May accounts	150.00		
132	J C M Porter reimbursement office expenses	83.21		13.64
	Total	3,337.12	1,381.67	459.11
				5,268.90
	Outstanding Accounts			
	Allotment rents (x1 plot)			7.50
	Football Club rent (last installment)			335.00
	Yearbook 2015 adverts (x1 advertiser)			70.00
	Total			412.50
	Money at bank			
	Current Account	1st October 2015		73,101.99
	Deposit Account	3rd September 2015		30,301.44
	Total			103,403.43
	Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after			100.00
	Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding			-
	Total			103,503.43
	Total after paying this months cheques			98,234.53
	Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques			67,933.09