

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on  
Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

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

**66. Apologies** Cllr Graham Lee (abroad on business).

**67. Minutes of Council meeting 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

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

**68. Matters of general report from previous meetings**

**68.1** (November Council, 59.1) Parish Clock. The Chairman reported that the overnight volume reducing device was working as intended. It was noted that thanks had been received from a parishioner to the Chairman for his patience in dealing with the Church Chimes issue ‘...acted professionally throughout... difficult for all at the Parish Council to stem their own opinions for the sake of neutrality’. It was noted that following a recent power cut there had been some concerns. The clock had an automatic reset mechanism that was activated according to the position of the hands and thus might result in it appearing to be non-functioning for a period; the new device would work in accordance with this. It was emphasized that any concerns should be made through the Parish Council and not made directly to the supplier.

It was agreed to write to Mr Andrew Godman, NHDC Head of Housing and Public Protection, to update him. Also to confirm his agreement to forward the details of the sound readings taken and to undertake a review of these at some point in the spring when atmospheric conditions were suitable. **Clerk**

**68.2** (November Council, 59.2) Library services. Cllrs Madeleine Legg and David Sims reported on progress for the Book Swap in the Parish Room; this would be accessible during post office opening hours. Following an alternative proposal from the Rector, shelving units had now been ordered; set-up would progress following delivery. A volunteer co-ordinator would be involved but the principle was that the Book Swap would be self-managing.

**69. 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)*

(Draft minutes of Management Committee Wednesday October 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 available)

**69.1** Recreation ground/pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported on the proposal to set up a users’ group to take on some management and development responsibilities. There had been no response from the user groups following the last meeting.

It was agreed to write to them again and ask whether this was the something they wished to progress with or not. It would be pointed out that the Parish Council would continue to manage the routine maintenance but hoped that the user groups would take on a more active role in developing the facilities according to their wishes and needs. The Parish Council had made some budget provision for any agreed development.

**MFL/MNW**

**69.2** Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that minor repairs had been undertaken. It was noted that clarification was to be sought from NHDC re section 106 funding; it was currently understood that refurbishment works were not eligible as they were not capital expenditure (see 73.1 below). It was noted that facilities at the Recreation Ground were included in the review of parish facilities by the Neighbourhood Plan group.

**69.3** War Memorial. Plans for cleaning, hedge/tree works and investigations re inscriptions by the Museum were noted. Consultation with interested groups and advice from local experts was ongoing.

**69.4** The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman). Dates for the volunteer working groups, co-ordinated by co-opted member Martin Lush, were noted. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had attended a session last week and a good amount of work had been achieved.

It was noted that repainting of the High Street railings (responsibility of Herts County Council) was to be funded by County Councillor Tony Hunter. The Parish Council had been requested to obtain quotes; this was in hand.

**Clerk**

**69.5** St Mary’s Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman). Cllr Martin Hoffman reported on recent correspondence with St Mary’s PCC re budgets for (i) contracted grounds maintenance, (ii) tree works, (iii) maintenance of boundaries. He reported that planned tree works had been undertaken that morning.

**69.6** The Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the works recommended following the professional tree survey were scheduled for early December. Discussions with the tenant re the Chapel of Rest were to be scheduled. **MFL**

**69.7** Allotments at Small Gains (Cllr David Sims). It was noted that proposals for (i) review of the deposit system, (ii) a small rent increase from April 2016, had been discussed at the Finance Committee meeting. Cllr David Sims expressed his view that the deposit system was not working well; also that any rent increase should be in small increments. He had looked into charges made by other authorities; these were generally much higher. It was agreed that budget proposals should reflect this (see 73.2 below).

It was agreed that a tenants' meeting be scheduled for the new year.

**DRS/Clerk**

## **70. Items of correspondence from parishioners**

**70.1** Re Street cleaning (responsibility of NHDC with additional input from the Parish Council).

The receipt from two parishioners of their concerns/complaints re the poor state of roads and footways was noted. The Chairman reported that he was to schedule a meeting with the Environmental Cleansing Officer in early January. **MNW**

**70.2** Re Parking problems.

**70.2.1** Receipt of thanks was noted from a parishioner to the parish councillors who had initiated the prompt police action to remove an abandoned car from the High Street.

**70.2.2** Receipt of a parishioner's complaint re parking on the pavement at the school junction was noted. The information had been passed to the police who had visited the vehicle's owner and given advice. Cllr David Short wished to note that parking outside the school was an issue not only at the 9am start and 3.15pm finish; he appealed for police visits at other times in addition to these.

**70.2.3** It was noted that 'yellow cards' for placing on offending vehicles and endorsed by the local police were available for use by both parish councillors and members of the public.

**70.3** Re Dog fouling.

It was noted that further complaints had been received from parishioners. Bagged dog faeces had apparently been thrown into hedges and into front gardens. The situation continued to be monitored by the NHDC Enforcement Officer at identified problem locations in Ashwell Street and Dixies Close. It was agreed that there were sufficient dog waste bins provided; additional bins would not solve the problem and the cost to the parish could not be justified.

**70.4** Re Post office services in the Parish Room. It was noted that concerns had been received that access had been denied in the run-up to closing times due to the number of customers queuing; the operative needed to close promptly on time in order to get to another commitment. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a meeting had been scheduled to discuss the matter. **MGH/Clerk**

A plea was made to customers not to arrive at the last minute particularly in the run up to Christmas.

## **71. Items re other authorities**

**71.1 Hertfordshire Highways/meeting** with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer Gary Henning (17<sup>th</sup> November 2015). Councillors Bridget Macey, David Sims and the Clerk had attended. Items to be funded from various Herts Highway budgets including from Cllr Hunter's Locality Budget were reviewed. Cllr David Sims reported on matters discussed (i) proposals re Station Road. It had been agreed that, particularly with two new housing developments, the situation in Station Road be fully reviewed. He had drafted some initial thoughts to inform fuller proposals by the Highways Officer. (ii) Safety improvements for the A505 Odsey junction. He noted that minor improvements promised in July were still pending. County Councillor Tony Hunter had reiterated that previous proposals for a 50mph speed limit had been rejected. It was noted that a parishioner had written with her concerns re signage.

**71.2 Hertfordshire Highways/road closures** at West End. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported his concerns re the chaos caused by the frequent and unpredictable road closures initiated without any warning in association with the building works at 30 West End. Bus services had been unable to continue on their routes, school children had been forced to disembark and walk the remaining distance. Commuters using the taxibus had missed connections with trains. It was agreed to write to County Councillor Tony Hunter requesting an explanation of this and his assurance that the matter would be pursued with those responsible. **Clerk**

**71.3 Hertfordshire County Council/bus services.** The Chairman reported that parishioner Joan Ridley was to attend the next Bus Users Group (BUG) meeting. Cllr Hoffman was pleased to note that she intended to raise concerns re the punctuality of the 90/91 service; this frequently missed the intended train connection by arriving too late at the station.

**71.4 NHDC** A request was noted to publicise the ‘Baldock Town Talk’; ‘...your opportunity to discuss with District Councillors matters of concern.’ Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 6.30 -7.15pm at the Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock.

## **72. Reports re planning matters**

### **72.1 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)*

**72.1** Draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November were noted.

**72.1.1** Receipt of further correspondence was noted re

NHDC Case Ref No: 15/02746/1HH. 3 Colbron Close

Full Planning Permission Householder: Retention and modification of outbuilding in rear garden.

### **72.2 Re NHDC Case Ref No: 15/00691/1 Land rear of 39-59 Station Road**

Outline Application: Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) residential development comprising of 14 dwelling with associated access off Green Lane (as amended by plan 130425- 06 received 5.6.15).

It was noted that a letter had been received from NHDC, ‘... an appeal has been made to the Secretary of State in respect of the above site. The appeal follows the refusal of planning permission by this Council. The appeal will be dealt with by the written procedure...’ comments made at the application stage will be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate’. Deadline for additional comments, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

It was noted that the Parish Council had consistently objected to the applications for this site; it had supported the objections, and the grounds for them, made by the NHDC Planning Officer in his various reports.

Cllr Martin Hoffman wished all to note the report from the Planning Officer to a previous, withdrawn, application for this site. He had intentionally retained a copy of this so that in the event of an appeal he could refer to it, as it would no longer be on the public record.

The following items of reference were noted:

Report from the NHDC Planning Officer re the previous, withdrawn, application Case Ref 14/02611/1.

Report from the NHDC Planning Officer re the current application Case Ref 15/00691/1.

NHDC Planning Control Committee minutes 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015; refusal of application Case Ref 15/00691/1.

Extract from above minutes, *‘There had been three withdrawn schemes attempting to secure development on this site prior to this application. These withdrawn schemes charted evolving attempts to overcome fundamental concerns relating to safe vehicular access and the impact of built development on what is presently a greenfield site.*

*The Area Planning Officer advised that, in his view...the issues of safe access and visual impact had not been satisfactorily resolved and remained fundamental and significant concerns that outweighed any acknowledged benefits.*

*He therefore concluded that, in this case, the scheme failed the Paragraph 14 test in the Framework and should be refused.’*

It was noted that a large number of local residents had expressed their objections to NHDC. Many had expressed concerns relating to highways safety; Hertfordshire Highways had also objected to the application.

Cllr David Short wished it to be noted that the site had not been proposed as part of the emerging Local Plan nor had it been identified by the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group as suitable for development.

It was **resolved** to write to the Planning Inspector reiterating the Parish Council’s objections that were based on the reports from the Planning Officer.

**Clerk**

It was agreed to keep local residents informed.

**Clerk**

### **72.3 Decisions on applications by NHDC as Planning Authority**

NHDC Case Ref No: 15/02636/1HH. Hodwell Barn, Hodwell

Full Planning Permission Householder: Two storey side extension and single storey rear extension linking the main dwelling to the existing shed and garden room.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

It was noted that the Parish Council had objected to the application and had recommended refusal to the Planning Officer.

### **73. Reports re Finance matters**

**73.1** Draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November were noted. Re item 6/Review of section 106 funding (see also 69.2). It was reported that NHDC had requested a formal resolution in support of the St Mary's PCC project for new windows for the Parish Room. It was agreed that whilst the Parish Council remained supportive in principle, clarification should be sought on whether this project would be acceptable for section 106 funding; there was no wish to support a project that fell outside the rules. It was noted that past applications for section 106 funding had been refused, eg Village Hall/new kitchen equipment, the Sports pavilion/new kitchen, Tennis Club/kitting out new facility, Cemetery/landscaping of new extension area; grounds for refusal had been various, eg refurbishment not capital, no relevant category. **Clerk**

**73.2** Proposals for the budget 2016-17. The following proposals were made in addition to those of the Finance Committee. Re Allotments at Small Gains (see 69.7 above), (i) to do away with the current deposit system, (ii) to increase rent for a full size plot to £20pa and a half-size plot to £10pa. Re expenditure item 5/Office equipment, that £500 be included for the purchase of a lap-top computer. Re Locum Clerk expenses, £1000 be added to Administration expenditure.

It was **resolved** that the proposals for the 2016-17 budget, including the additions/amendments above, be accepted.

**73.3** A proposal was made to set the Parish Precept for 2016-17 at £54,500.

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

It was noted that this figure would be submitted to NHDC by the deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016. **Clerk**

**73.4** Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

### **74. To receive any reports from working groups**

**74.1** Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that another survey was planned for the new year.

**74.2** Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reminded all contributors that submissions for the 2016 edition were now due.

**74.3** Moss Cottage Homes (trustee Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the vacancy had now been filled.

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

*Standing Orders suspended for this item to allow public participation. Item taken at 8.30pm*

**75.1** Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey reported on the new Neighbourhood Watch open sessions that would be held monthly in the Parish Room to coincide with the Friday morning post office opening, 10-12 noon. Cllr Martin Hoffman noted that police speeding checks were carried out in the village, however data gathered had not been forwarded as agreed. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had reiterated the request and would raise the matter again at the NHW session.

**75.2** Items raised by parishioners. It was clarified that dogs were only permitted on the Recreation Ground if they were on a lead. This was consistent with the legal definition of 'under control'. Any abuse of this rule should be reported as should anyone not clearing up dog faeces.

**Meeting closed at 9.45**

**Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016, 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.
- Sunnymead Park Homes newsletter

## Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -December 2015			Date	2nd December 2015		
			Declarations:	Clr Sims item 172		
Proposed (i) Cllr Macey (ii) Cllr Legg				Clr Hoffman item 173		
			£	£	£	
<b>Receipts</b>			Precept	Grants	Other	
					Total	
66	Santander interest a/c	bank interest			11.59	11.59
67	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent			68.75	68.75
68	Dignity Funerals Ltd	interment fee (cemetery works 15.29)			200.00	200.00
<b>Total</b>				0.00	280.34	268.75
			Admin, staff costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
<b>Payments</b>						
<b>By Direct Debit</b>						
154	E.ON (01/12/15)	chapel electricity		11.00		11.00
155	NHDC (01/11/15)	Trade refuse container (S&E)		95.16		95.16
156	E.ON (18/11/15)	Pavilion electricity		7.98	0.40	8.38
157	BT (18/11/15)	Office telephone and broadband	141.11		28.22	169.33
<b>By Cheque</b>						
158	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1,083.11			1083.11
159	J C M Porter	reimbursement Norton renewal	54.16		10.83	64.99
160	J C M Porter	reimbursement re new PC and software	383.32		76.65	459.97
161	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	56.65		11.33	67.98
162	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing	323.20			323.20
163	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec	57.32			57.32
164	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	314.25			314.25
165	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00		30.00
166	Ashwell St Mary's PCC	Parish room hire (18/11/15)	8.00			8.00
167	HAPTC	Training course (12/11/2015)	45.00			45.00
168	British Gas	electricity toilets (final payment to 08/11/2015)		32.00	1.60	33.60
169	D B Sharp and Sons Ltd	repairs gents toilets		80.00	16.00	96.00
170	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 18		49.00	9.80	58.80
171	Balaam Brothers Ltd	repairs playground fencing		160.00	32.00	192.00
172	Mr David Sims	reimbursement re allotments		60.00		60.00
173	Ashwell Village Museum	support grant (Minute 92.2 Dec Council 2014)	500.00			500.00
174	Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (02/11 -29/11)		80.00	16.00	96.00
175	HCC Pensions-LGPS Acco	clerk's pension	398.00			398.00
<b>Total</b>			3,364.12	605.14	202.83	4,172.09
<b>Outstanding Accounts</b>						
Allotment rents (xl plot)					7.50	
Football Club rent (last installment)					335.00	
Yearbook 2015 adverts (xl advertiser)					70.00	
<b>Total</b>						412.50
<b>Money at bank</b>						
Current Account			1st December 2015		61,937.61	
Deposit Account			2nd November 2015		30,324.24	
<b>Total</b>						92,261.85
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after						200.00
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding						1,151.62
<b>Total</b>						91,310.23
Total after paying this months cheques						87,138.14
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques						56,813.90