

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 02 March 2016 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

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

99. Apologies Cllr Graham Lee (away).

100. Minutes of Council meeting 03 February 2016

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

101. Matters of general report from previous meetings

101.1 (February Council, 89.4) Post office services in the Parish Room/Concern re repeat of forced closure due to equipment failure. Sir Oliver Heald, MP, had responded that, following the Parish Council's request, he had written to Post Office Ltd and was awaiting an answer from them.

101.2 (February Council, 89.5) 1st Ashwell Scout Group (Scouts, Cubs and Beavers) fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) for Ashwell. It was noted that general information had been supplied via HAPTC. It was understood that the Scouts' fundraising was continuing.

101.3 (February Council, 91.2) Superfast broadband. It was noted that Sir Oliver Heald, MP, had responded giving further information on dates proposed for Ashwell.

101.4 (February Council, 89.5) Re 'Clean for the Queen' street cleaning campaign (www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk). Parish event planned for Saturday 5th March. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that plans were in place. The event had been publicised on social media and around the village. It was agreed that her draft press release be issued.

102. 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 last Management/Finance Committee Tuesday 16th February 2016 available)

102.1 Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that discussions re the tenancy of the Chapel of Rest were ongoing. A quote for some major tree works had been received; as this was a significant sum it was agreed that alternative quotes be obtained. **Clerk**

102.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the Users' Group was progressing the new lockers for the changing rooms. A replacement storage unit at the rear of the pavilion was still being investigated.

102.3 Playground (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the Supernova (roundabout) had now been roped off due to problems with the safety surfacing.

(see also 105.1.2 re section 106 claims to NHDC)

102.4 Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that research into new toilets in the longer term was continuing. It was agreed that a deep clean be commissioned again, timed for prior to the At Home. (see also 105.1.2 re section 106 claims to NHDC) **Clerk**

102.5 The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a response from County Councillor Tony Hunter re the Springs railings was still pending. The Parish Council had supplied the required quote and the supplier was awaiting instruction. The work was to be funded from the County Councillor's budget.

102.6 Small Gains (Allotments, Accies sports field and shared car parking area) (Cllr David Sims)

Cllr David Sims reported that he had one quote in hand for the proposed car park surfacing; he had arranged site visits with further suppliers to obtain several more.

(see also 105.1.2 re section 106 claims to NHDC)

Cllr David Sims reported that a letter was to be sent to all the allotment tenants with rent invoices for the coming season. A tenants' meeting would be arranged once it had been determined which tenants would be carrying on.

102.7 Misc amenities (The Lock Up, Merchant Taylors' Green, Carters' Pond) Nothing to report.

102.8 Street furniture (Cllr Bridget Macey) It was noted that the new bin for the High Street at the top of the Springs steps would be installed shortly.

102.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the PCC had requested whether the Parish Council was in a position to contribute further to the cost of the new fence installed on the Hodwell boundary (the Parish Council had contributed £5,000 out

of the total cost of £8,000). It was agreed to respond that until the Parish Council was more certain about the outstanding section 106 claims to NHDC it was not able to commit any further funds from its reserves. It would reconsider the situation in due course and keep the PCC informed.

(see also 105.1.2 re section 106 claims to NHDC)

In response to a question from Cllr David Short, Cllr Hoffman responded that an annual tree survey was commissioned by the PCC as the body responsible for the site although this was funded by the Parish Council. The last survey had not recommended any works to the Holm Oaks on the Mill Street boundary. Reduction of the Holm Oaks adjacent to one of houses in Swan Street had been included and works had been completed. Cllr David Short suggested that the Holm Oaks should be removed completely. The next tree survey was due shortly.

102.10 Parish Clock (Cllr Mark White) Nothing to report.

102.11 War Memorial It was noted that agreed cleaning works were pending a date from the supplier. Detailed proposals and costings for works to the hedge and beech trees was pending; the preferred supplier had sought expert advice due the nature of the works requested.

103. Items re other authorities/organisations

103.1 Hertfordshire Highways

103.1.1 (February Council, 92.1.1) Ringway/Parish Action Plan (PAP). It was noted that the Parish Council's spreadsheet of items for attention had been forwarded to Derek Jerrard, District Service Agent for North Herts and Stevenage. One item had already been identified to be progressed alongside other works whilst operatives were in the locality. This was an objective of the PAP.

103.1.2 County Councillor Tony Hunter's Locality Budget for 2016-17.

(www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets)

It was noted that information had been received from his highways officer re those items likely to be included from the list proposed (see below re Station Road safety improvement proposals). It was noted that the request for extension of the yellow zig-zag markings outside the school had been refused on grounds that the maximum length permitted was already in place. Cllr David Short (school governor representative) reported that the PCSO had made more frequent visits. Also that the school did raise the issue via newsletters to parents etc. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his disappointment that the drivers of vehicles who were clearly breaking the law by parking on pavements and obstructing the junction had not been issued with penalty notices.

103.1.3 (January Council, 81.1.2) Station Road/Update on proposals put to County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer for safety improvements to be funded from section 106 money held by HCC. Cllr David Sims reported that proposals for additional footways and a new crossing point to enable safer pedestrian access from the new developments to the centre of the village and the school were being considered and costed. Installation of wooden posts to protect the verge outside the Cemetery was also to be progressed. Carriageway surfacing and kerb works to the section not completed last year were already on the works programme for 2016-17.

103.1.4 Police Road Safety Fund/Information received from the Police and Crime Commissioner. It was noted that further details had been requested and a proposal made to County Councillor Tony Hunter for a bid to support Station Road safety improvements so that all items could be progressed.

103.1.5 Temporary Road Closure Gardiners Lane/Notice received for 4-6th April to enable maintenance works. Concerns were expressed that not all the signage had been removed following the previous road closure in the High Street.

103.2 Hertfordshire Highways/ Rights of Way (Cllr David Short)

103.2.1 Cllr David Short reported information he had received from Julia Clarke, Countryside Access Officer, re proposals for surface improvements to Ashwell Street leading to the tennis courts; material to be used would be hard-core not tarmac.

103.2.2 It was noted that concerns had been forwarded by Steeple Morden Parish Council re the damage caused by motorcyclists and four-wheel vehicle drivers. The relevant Cambridgeshire authorities had carried out works to some parts but significant problems persisted. It was noted that most of the areas of concern were in Cambridgeshire although a section of Ashwell Street where it met the Shire Balk was also affected.

103.3 Hertfordshire County Council/other matters

103.3.1 (February Council, 92.2.1) Bus services. It was noted that information had been sent via County Councillor Tony Hunter to clarify the situation re publicity of the 127 service (Royston/Guilden Morden/Ashwell/Eyeworth/Everton) run under contract from Cambridgeshire County Council.

104. Reports re planning matters

104.1 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)

It was noted that two items were to be considered by the Planning Committee, Sunday 6th March, 9.00am.

Case Ref No: 16/00154/1HH 55 Back Street

Full Planning Permission Householder : Two and single storey rear extension and first floor rear extension.

Applicant: Salisbury Developments, Letchworth.

Case Ref Nos: 16/00237/1HH and 16/00289/1LB 2 Springhead

Full Planning Permission Householder : Single storey rear extension.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs John Vidler

104.2 Decision by Planning Inspector/Appeal re NHDC refusal of application.

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 the grounds for refusal by NHDC had included two main elements, (i) unacceptable impact on a greenfield site outside the policy boundary, and (ii) inadequate access. The Planning Inspector had based his rejection of the appeal on the inadequate access. The report had included consideration of the site’s character and appearance and had concluded ‘...has not been identified for any designation for the quality of its own landscape or its contribution to a wider area of landscape value.’ (see also 106.1 below)

104.3 Draft Local Plan 2011-2031 Preferred Options/Allocated housing site Land west of Claybush Road.

The Chairman reported that a planning agent had made enquiries with regard to a venue for a public consultation/exhibition on Thursday 24th March; contact details had been provided re the Parish Room, Village Hall, URC Hall. (see also 106.1 below)

104.4 Requests to NHDC re works to Trees in Conservation Area

Case ref No.16/00358/1TCA The Mill, Mill Street and The Stables. Fell 1 Cherry tree; Fell 1 Alder Tree; partial crown reduction of 1 Horse Chestnut by 3 metres.

It was noted that the definition/location of the Alder had been queried by the Parish Council’s advisor and the Planning Officer requested to clarify. **Clerk**

Case ref No.16/00429/1TPO 62 Back Street. Beech tree. Crown reduce by 25% (roughly 1.5 metres all round).

No objection but with advice that the work should be done carefully; this was an important street tree, and potentially unstable because of the narrow patch of ground it was on. **Clerk**

105. Reports re Finance matters

105.1 (February Council, 94.1) Section 106 claims to NHDC.

105.1.1 Further correspondence re the joint claim by Cricket Club and the Parish Council to fund a new mower (a specialist type for use by Cricket Club volunteers maintaining the cricket square, to be insured by the Parish Council)/Claim rejected by NHDC; Parish Council appeal also rejected.

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that representatives of the Cricket Club were progressing a bid for funding from the NHDC Baldock & District Committee. This was for £1,500 of the total cost of £4,500 and was due to be considered this coming Monday. He proposed that if the bid was successful, the Parish Council should fund, from its reserves, the additional £3,000 needed. The proposal did not get a seconder. Other parish councillors expressed the view that any further discussion on this should be held until further information was forthcoming.

105.1.2 It was noted that a further email had been received from the Development and Conservation Manager re the future projects identified. This had informed that all were likely to be refused as they would fail to meet the required criteria.

(i) Playground/new wet-pour surface (increased use had made the existing surfacing unviable and not compliant with required standards): ‘replacement’.

(ii) Public toilets/refurbishment (to bring the facilities up to a required standard): ‘again refurbishment unless it was proposed to provide additional facilities e.g. a disabled toilet’.

(iii) Small Gains car park (shared by allotment tenants and Accies junior football club in a poor state due to increased use by the Accies and new surfacing required to bring it up to an acceptable standard): ‘unfortunately the proposal does not comply with any of the headings under which contributions have been collected and no monies have been received for the specific proposal.’

Parish councillors again queried why the claim for replacement windows in the Parish Room had been successful but similar projects would apparently not meet the criteria.

105.1.3 (February Council, 94.1.3) It was noted that the request to NHDC for an officer to attend a Parish Council meeting to provide clarification re the eligibility rules and procedures to be followed had been reiterated. It was noted that the relevant officer had recently retired; a different officer had now been approached.

It was agreed that District Councillor Janine Paterson continue to be kept updated and that she be asked to attend at the same time as the NHDC officer. Also that she be requested to provide information as to who was now responsible for decisions on section 106 claims. **Clerk**

105.1.4 It was noted that information had been sought from HAPTC. The county officer had responded that planning obligation was a complex subject and with seven authorities in the county all operating different systems it was difficult to offer central advice and training. That said any assistance would be given where possible. Experience was that many parish councils struggled to make successful claims.

105.2 Local Government Pension Scheme. It was noted that an invoice had been received for actuarial fees; this was contrary to advice given when the Parish Council had joined the scheme. Advice had been sought from HAPTC; they were of the view that the claim should be robustly challenged and had given details of how to progress this. It was agreed that this should be done. **Clerk**

105.3 Audit.

105.3.1 Proposal to approve the review of the Risk Assessment Policy.

It was *resolved* that this be approved and signed.

105.3.2 Proposal to approve the Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2015-16.

It was *resolved* that this be approved and signed.

105.3.3 The timetable for the Internal and External Audit 2015-16 was noted, ie the report from the Internal Auditor and a recommendation from the Finance Committee to be proposed to a full Council meeting at the latest by 30th June and followed by the submission to the External Auditor by the audit date of 1st July. Approved accounts to be published by 30th September.

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

Declarations of interest were noted: Cllrs David Sims, David Short, Mark White (all reimbursements; see accounts sheet for details).

Item 236, Clerk’s pension, was noted (see accounts sheet for details).

It was reported that completed forms had been submitted to the LGPS. They had since requested further details re health; these would be provided.

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

106. To receive any reports from working groups

106.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that a draft report, particularly re housing, would be presented to NHDC by May; this in time for their consideration prior to their meeting on the District Local Plan in July. Communications were ongoing with relevant NHDC officers and had been positive. The group had identified two new potential sites for housing that landowners wished to promote. All proposed sites would be part of the required referendum before they were formally adopted. The group was also paying particular attention to documents relating to visual impact such as the Landscape Character Assessment (see also 104.2 and 104.3 above).

The group was to present a report and host a stand at the Annual Parish Meeting; parish councillors would have information prior to the meeting. **CDS**

106.2 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the 2016 edition was now at the printers. Items to be delivered concurrently (Music Festival leaflet, At Home publicity and the green ‘Report It’ cards) would be collated on Friday 11th March and delivery would take place over the following weekend.

106.3 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman noted that the regular police information had included a report on speeding prosecutions; he wished to know how many of these related to Ashwell.

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

Standing orders suspended for this item (taken at 8.30pm)

107.1 Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that the regular OWL update had recently included information on scams and other items particularly relevant to elderly people. Residents of Sunnymead Orchard Park were kept informed on such matters. Enquiries had determined that the warden of Wolverley House was not signed up to the system; she had arranged for the PCSO to assist in this.

(See also 103.1.2 and 106.3 above).

107.2 Ashwell School Governing Body. Cllr David Short (a school governor in his own right) reported that the swimming pool had now been closed. Various factors had contributed to the decision; it was no longer fit for purpose and too expensive to repair, the numbers of children at the school had risen considerably, and the disruption to the requirements set by the national curriculum significant. Other options to teach swimming in accordance with required standards would be progressed; there were advantages to this approach. Fundraising was taking place for a new playground facility in the area the pool had occupied. In response to a question from a parishioner he reiterated the reasons for the decision. This and the financial aspects were a matter for the school and not the Parish Council.

107.3 The Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman (trustee in his own right) reported that the AGM of the trustees would be held on 17th March.

107.4 Moss Cottage Homes. Cllr Madeleine Legg (trustee on behalf of the Parish Council) reported that Mrs May Cook would no longer be continuing as a trustee when her current term ended. It was agreed that a letter be sent thanking her for her valued contribution over many years. It was agreed that a suitable replacement be considered and formally proposed at the AGM in May. **Clerk**

107.5 Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr David Short (responsible for the Parish Council's liaison with the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company) reported that two representatives of the Company had visited the village on 24th February to discuss bids to the trust with the school and youth groups. The trustees had visited the school and the netball courts off Gardiners Lane, the URC hall, St Mary's Church and the Parish Room, the playground at the recreation ground and Small Gains. He wished it to be noted that the Parish Council acted as a host for this annual visit and, although it provided information if requested, it played no role in the decision making by the trustees. The deadline for bids to the trust was 24th March.

107.6 Book Swap. Cllr David Sims reported that the recent Saturday morning coffee session had been successful. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had attended; it had been a well-supported and enjoyable event. These would be held regularly on the second Saturday of every month; access would also continue when the Parish Room was open such as during post office opening hours.

107.7 Items from parishioners. Re Scouts fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (see 101.2 above). It was suggested that the Rose & Crown might be a suitable location. See also 107.2 above.

Meeting closed to the public at 9.20pm for an *in camera* item

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 108. To be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that included personnel matters.

Meeting closed at 9.25pm

Forthcoming meetings

Annual Parish Meeting, Wednesday 30th March 8pm, at the school (big hall).

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 6th April 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 -March 2016				03 March 2016	
		Declarations: Cllr Sims item 234,Cllr White item 237, Cllr Short item 238.			
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman (ii) Cllr Macey					
		£	£	£	£
Receipts		Precept	Grants	Other	Total
79	Santander interest a/c	bank interest		11.56	11.56
80	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent		68.75	68.75
81	personal cheque	cemetery works 16.05		250.00	250.00
82	personal payment	cemetery works 16.04		450.00	450.00
83	personal payment	cemetery works 15.32		75.00	75.00
84	NHDC	Rural grant/environment	890.00		890.00
85	Amber Osteopathy	yearbook advert 16.01		125.00	125.00
86	McGoldrick (Ashwell Pilat	yearbook advert 16.25		60.00	60.00
87	R&A Transport services	yearbook advert 16.01		40.00	40.00
88	Hares Clinics Ltd	yearbook advert 16.04		125.00	125.00
89	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent		68.75	68.75
Total			890.00	1,274.06	2,164.06
		Admin, staff costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
Payments					
By Direct Debit					
217	E.ON (01/03/16)	chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
218	E.ON (29/02/16)	Pavilion electricity		28.11	29.52
219	E.ON (22/02/16)	Public toilets electricity		23.01	24.16
220	Affinity Water (01/03/16)	Cemetery water		16.03	16.03
221	NHDC (01/02/16)	Trade refuse container (S&E)		95.16	95.16
222	BT (18/02/16)	Office telephone and broadband	162.51	32.50	195.01
By Cheque					
223	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1083.11		1083.11
224	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	94.75	16.01	110.76
225	HCC Pensions-LGPS Acco	clerk's pension	398.00		398.00
226	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		296.63	296.63
227	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec		57.52	57.52
228	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	230.85	22.20	253.05
229	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00	30.00
230	East Herts Signs Ltd	cemetery memorial plaque CW 15.32		29.85	35.82
231	Good Directions Ltd	Litter bin (High St by Springs steps)		560.00	672.00
232	Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (04/01-31/01)		80.00	96.00
233	RC Smith Carpenter & Join	lockers at pavilion (deposit)		500.00	500.00
234	Mr D Sims	reimbursement re allotments (weedkiller)		19.15	19.15
235	Ashwell PCC	grant re Ashwell Village News	125.00		125.00
236	J C M Porter	allocated reserve for clerk's pension lump sum	6000.00		6000.00
237	Mr M White	reimbursement ECO equipment expenses		19.99	19.99
238	Mr D Short	reimbursement HCT trustees visit expenses	64.90		64.90
239	Ashwell Youth & Commu	village hall room hire 16/02/2016	24.00		24.00
240	Mr and Mrs S Kirtland	return allotment deposit		20.00	20.00
Total		8,020.61	1,635.34	149.98	9,805.93
Outstanding Accounts					
Football Club rent (last installment)				335.00	
Yearbook 2015 adverts (xl advertiser)				70.00	
Total					405.00
Money at bank					
Current Account		01 March 2016		49,539.39	
Deposit Account		01 February 2016		30,358.61	
Total					79,898.00
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after					165.00
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding					304.48
Total					79,758.52
Total after paying this months cheques					69,952.59
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques					39,593.98