

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting held on
Wednesday 06 July 2016 in the Parish Room**

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

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

28. Apologies for absence None.

29. Minutes of previous meetings

29.1 Minutes of the Council meeting 1st June 2016.

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

29.2 The draft minutes of the AGM's of the charities (i) the Ashwell Village Trust and (ii) the Allotment for Exercise and Recreation, held on 1st June 2016, were noted.

30. Matters of general report from previous meetings

30.1 (June Council, 19.1) Cricket Club correspondence. The Chairman reported that issues with regard to the bar at the pavilion had now been resolved.

30.2 (May Council, 19.3) 1st Ashwell Scout Group fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD).

It was noted that the Parish Council's application to adopt the old red telephone box in the High Street had been accepted by BT. The required 90-day consultation period, to be undertaken by NHDC, would now commence.

31. Parish management reports (current responsibilities shown in brackets)

(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; next meeting to be scheduled for late August/September)

31.1 Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg)

31.1.1 The Chapel of Rest. Cllr Madeleine Legg gave an update on negotiations and proposals for the new lease. Concerns had been raised re security of tenure and a request was made to clarify 'exclusive use'. It was felt that details of tariffs, suitably index linked, should be included in the lease to prevent the potential for unreasonable charges to be made. A request would be made to the tenant for a contribution to the legal costs. The draft proposals were agreed.

31.1.2 Ashes plots area. Cllr Madeleine Legg gave an update on concerns from parishioners; some plots had vases/statuettes etc that were preventing the contractor from strimming the grass between plots.

The current agreement was that if families wished to have items on their plots that prevented the contractor from mowing the immediate area then they must take responsibility for regularly tending to it themselves. Neglected plots and overgrown grass were not fair on others. Consultation with known interested parties was taking place to determine their views. **Clerk**

31.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg)

31.2.1 Users' Group. It was reported that, following a resignation, Graham Scott had taken over the role of group leader. It was noted that Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg represented the Parish Council on the group.

31.2.2 It was noted that requests for ad hoc use over the summer period were forwarded to parish councillors for their approval. A spreadsheet of dates/user details was kept and updates sent to clubs to avoid clashes. **Clerk**

31.3 Playground (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the recently installed safety surfacing was looking very good; a number of commendations had been received and the equipment was being well used.

31.4 Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg)

(See also item 34.1 below) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that a good dialogue with NHDC Community Development Manager, Stuart Izzard, was ongoing; he was awaiting responses from planning officers as to categories that might be accessed and sums available.

31.5 The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman)

31.5.1 Cllr Martin Hoffman reported communication with the new Natural England Responsible Officer for Ashwell Springs SSSI; relations with the authority had always been good.

31.5.2 Cllr Martin Hoffman reported a request from the Letchworth and Baldock Children's Centre Group

to hold two events over the summer period; these would be targeted at Ashwell families. It was agreed that permission be granted but no gazebos or similar structures would be allowed. **Clerk**

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

31.6.1 Allotments. Cllr David Sims reported that these were looking good.

31.6.2 New fencing between allotments and the football field. Cllr David Sims reported that the netting had already been vandalised. The police had agreed to provide extra patrols and warning notices had been posted.

31.6.3 Car parking request. The Chairman reported that he had received a request from a local resident for use in conjunction with a private event. Concern was raised that Sunday was a popular day for allotment holders using the car parking area. It was agreed that permission be granted but limited to fifteen cars. The Cycle Club would be approached to see if they were willing for their car parking area to be used.

31.7 Miscellaneous amenities

(The Lock Up - Cllr David Short. Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond - Cllr Martin Hoffman)

31.7.1 Cllr David Short reported that the sign outside the Lock Up and the plaque on the Merchant Taylors' Green seat would benefit from repainting; Cllr Mark White volunteered to investigate options. **MNW**

31.7.2 Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the tree ties on the Carters Pond Hornbeam tree had been removed as they had become too tight; expert advice was being sought to confirm that replacements were not needed.

31.8 Street furniture (Cllr Bridget Macey) Nothing to report.

31.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman)

Cllr Martin Hoffman gave an update following the recent meeting with PCC representatives. Works to the Holm Oak trees on the Mill Street boundary would be progressed once the required Conservation Area permission had been received from NHDC.

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

31.11 War Memorial

Investigation into possible missing inscriptions. It was noted that a report had been received from the Museum Hon Curator, Peter Greener. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that this had been discussed at a Museum meeting (he had attended as the Chairman of the trustees). The criteria for inclusion had been considered, also the need to avoid replication on other memorials. These factors having been applied there remained one name, Horace Bryant, that was to be investigated further to clarify his connection with the village.

32. Items re other authorities/organisations

32.1 Hertfordshire Highways

32.1.1 Cllr David Sims gave an update following his meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter and the highways officer. This included (i) the proposals for Station Road safety improvements, (ii) installation of Speed Indicator Devices, (iii) various maintenance issues, (iv) the potential bid to the Police Road Safety Fund, (v) items allocated for expenditure from County Councillor Tony Hunter's Highways Locality Budget for 2016-17 (www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets) and his Locality Budget for 2016-17 (www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets). Cllr Sims emphasized that questions had been put re previously agreed items not yet delivered; these included the safety improvements to the A505 Odsey junction agreed for action in July 2015.

32.1.2 (June Council, 20.1.5) LED Street-lighting/programme to convert all units to LED lighting; 'North Herts -February 2017'. It was noted that County Councillor Tony Hunter had assured that the design standards, ie heritage style, swan neck columns in the correct green colour, would not be an issue. It was agreed that confirmation of this be sought from the relevant project manager. **Clerk**

32.1.3 Street lighting maintenance issues. Cllr David Sims expressed his concerns re units that were still not working. A list of those that had been reported using the online system but were still out of action would be sent to County Councillor Tony Hunter. **DRS**

32.1.4 Grass cutting. See 37.2.3 below.

32.2 Hertfordshire Highways/Rights of Way

32.2.1 Footpath from Silver Street to Angells Meadow/concern from a resident re grass cutting. Correspondence between the resident and the HCC rights of way officer was noted. The latter had informed that their contractor only did two cuts per season. She requested the Parish Council's views on the proposal to install a hard surface. It was understood that the houses in Silver Street had garages and space for parking/bin storage at the rear of their properties in Angells Meadow. However, no. 13 had no

rear entrance to easily access these so bins were stored in their rear garden and moved onto the frontage in Silver Street for emptying via the grassed footpath. It was noted that there were two other footpaths very close by giving access from Silver Street to Angells Meadow so any public benefit to installing hard surfacing was difficult to justify. Following discussion it was agreed that expenditure from public funds on hard surfacing of the footpath could not be supported. **Clerk**

32.2.2 Ashwell Street BOAT. Cllr David Short reported that works to fill potholes on the section of Ashwell Street leading towards Partridge Hill had been good, also repairs at the easterly section past the Caravan Club site. Cllr Graham Lee raised again concerns that had been discussed in relation to the planning application for the Cooke Engineering site; these had included potential problems for walkers, horse riders. etc due to vehicles accessing the site and overflow parking causing an obstruction. He raised the possibility of requesting a change of status to a category that would not permit vehicle access. This would mean that any houses on the site would have to use alternative access such as the existing front entrance. He was also concerned that surfacing material, to provide vehicular access to the site, probably tarmac, would be another example of increasing, inappropriate urbanisation. Other parish councillors were concerned that this would be of little benefit to the village as a whole. See also 32.2.4 below.

32.2.3 Twitchels/concerns from parishioners re overhanging vegetation were noted.

32.2.4 Information from the Icknield Way Association to all parishes along the route was noted. (see www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk).

32.3 Hertfordshire County Council

32.3.1 90/91 Bus service. It was noted that (i) information had been received via parishioner Joan Ridley that a new timetable would be commencing from 27th June, (ii) subsequent correspondence between parishioners and the relevant HCC officer had shown some to be in favour and others not.

32.3.2 Ashwell School admissions. Cllr David Short (a school governor in his own right) provided background information on the consultation re the proposal to reduce the PAN (published admission number) for Ashwell School from 38 to 30; ‘...the current intake of 38 has created serious class organisational issues which have led to significant budgetary difficulties...Without a reduction in admission number the school will be unable to balance its budget going forward’. Cllr Short explained that of the current 272 pupils, 59 came from outside the traditional catchment area of Ashwell and the surrounding villages; it was envisaged that the school would return to a local school providing for the local catchment area. It was agreed to support the proposal; Cllr Short encouraged individuals to respond also.

Deadline for comments 22nd July 2016.

Clerk

32.4 North Herts District Council

32.4.1 (June Council, 21.3.2) NHDC Waste Management and Street Cleansing Contract renewal from Spring 2018. The response from the NHDC officer and his proposal to involve the District Councillor was noted.

See also 37.2.1 below re access problems for waste/recycling vehicle due to parking obstruction.

33. Reports re planning matters

(draft minutes of meetings of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 11th May and Sunday 15th May now available)

33.1 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)

New applications received as of 29th June.

33.1.1 It was noted that the following two applications had been considered at a meeting of the Planning Committee (see minutes of meeting Wednesday 6th July).

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/01420/1HH 16 Newnham Way

Full Planning Permission Householder: Single storey side and rear extension and ancillary works.

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/01345/1 and 16/01346/1LB

68 High Street (includes The Star of India takeaway and adjacent residential)

Full Planning Permission: Change of use of existing take away shop to additional residential floor-space and removal of existing flat roof single storey rear extension and existing commercial flue. Alterations to ground floor windows and door in front elevation and insertion of first floor windows in side (west) elevation.

Listed Building Consent: Internal and external alterations in part to facilitate change of use of existing take away shop to additional residential floor-space. Removal of existing flat roof single storey rear extension and existing commercial flue. Installation of external flue on rear elevation for wood burner.

33.1.2 The following application was considered.

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/01322/1HH 16 Dixies Close

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

It was noted that no concerns or objections had been received either from parish councillors or members of the public.

It was **resolved** that a recommendation be made to the Planning Officer to grant approval.

Clerk

33.2 The following from NHDC, as the planning authority, were noted.

33.2.1 (May Council, 12.1.2) NHDC Case Ref No: 16/00245/1HH, 94 Station Road.

Full Planning Permission Householder: First floor rear extension.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

33.2.2 (Planning Committee, 15 May 2016)

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/00992/1. J Cooke Engineering, Ashwell Street

Full Planning Permission: Residential development comprising of 1 x 4 detached bed dwelling, 4 x 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and 4 x 4 bed semi-detached dwellings following demolition of existing factory building. Applicant: Market Homes (Ashwell) Ltd.

Application withdrawn.

33.3 The following appeal decision was noted.

NHDC Case Ref 15/01712/1, 18 Newnham Way. 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. Appeal made to The Planning Inspectorate against a refusal to grant planning permission.

Appeal decision: The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted... subject to the conditions in the schedule at the end of this decision.

'...not imposed the Council's suggested condition removing all of the 'permitted development' rights in respect of the new dwelling.'

33.3.1 It was noted that the Planning Inspector had referred to, but not been in possession of a copy of, the *Ashwell Village Design Statement* (www.ashwell.gov.uk/AVDS.pdf). It was agreed that steps be taken to ensure it was fully available in future.

Clerk

33.3.2 It was noted that retention and protection of trees was a condition. It was agreed that a Tree Protection Order be proposed to the planning authority to strengthen this planning condition.

Clerk

33.3.3 It was noted that sightlines for the approved access would require acquisition of a small strip of neighbouring land and re-siting of the hedge/field boundary. It was understood that the 30mph limit may also have to be re-sited. A suggestion was made that the developer should fund a Speed Indicator Device at this location. Long-standing safety concerns, backed up by speed checking data, existed in relation to speeding traffic entering the village down Newnham Hill.

Clerk

33.4 To note the letter from parishioner John Hare informing of his views re possible development at Claybush Road.

Standing Orders suspended for this item to permit members of the public to speak.

Parishioner John Hare (resident of Claybush Road and a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group) reiterated the points made in his letter, ie his objections, based on the NHDC site assessment criteria, to the inclusion of the Claybush Hill site in the land allocation for housing development and a request to consider the alternative sites identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. He had sent a copy to the Parish Council and, in advance of their meeting scheduled for 20th July when the draft District Local Plan would be considered, he had personally delivered it to all the members of the District Council. He questioned whether the Parish Council would be sending a representative to speak at the District Council meeting on 20th July; he had already been in communication to book a speaking slot.

It was noted that (i) communications with the District Council re the District Local Plan was an agenda item; this would include any decisions on actions re the meeting on 20th July, (ii) parish councillors were elected to represent the views of the whole parish and needed to avoid being seen to favour any particular lobby group, (iii) the Parish Council had set up the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to undertake

surveys/consultations with parishioners to determine their views, (iv) parish councillors needed to be aware of the rules re pre-determination and bias.

It was agreed that (i) a letter from the Parish Council would be sent to all the members of the District Council in advance of their meeting on 20th July; this would closely reflect the content of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, (ii) Cllr David Short would speak at that meeting as a representative of the Parish Council. A draft of the letter would be sent to all parish councillors for their comments prior to despatch; the content of the verbal presentation by Cllr Short would be based on the letter.

Parish councillors noted that this did not in any way prevent individual parishioners or groups of parishioners putting forward their views or requesting a slot to speak at the District Council meeting on 20th July.

33.5 Further communications re the District Local Plan. See 33.4 above.

34. Reports re Finance matters

34.1 (May Council, 13.1) Section 106 claims to NHDC. The following was noted.

Re the public toilets at the Recreation Ground -see 31.4 above. Re the proposals for car park surfacing at Small Gains, Cllr David Sims reported that further work on the draft proposal was needed. **Clerk**

34.2 Audit 2015-16.

34.2.1 Annual Return/Section 4. Receipt of the report from the Internal Auditor was noted; no issues had been raised.

34.2.2 It was noted that the public 'available for inspection' period from 1st July to 11th August had been publicised.

34.2.3 It was noted that the unaudited accounts had been published by 30th June deadline.

34.2.4 It was noted that the Annual Return and accompanying documents had been prepared in readiness for submission to the External Auditor by the 25th July. **Clerk**

34.3 The request from the Football Club re the rent charged for their use of premises at the Recreation Ground/Pavilion was noted. It was agreed that this be set at £600 on the grounds that (i) the club was only fielding one team this season, (ii) the Accies rent was £600. **Clerk**

34.4 Insurance. The response from the insurer re an additional item (mower for the cricket square) was noted; an additional charge would apply from October. It was proposed that this be added to the Cricket Club's rent next year. It was noted that a review of the whole policy was to be undertaken prior to the renewal date at the end of September. **Clerk**

34.5 Budget tracking and allocated reserves 2016-17. Updated documents distributed to all parish councillors for interim review were noted.

34.6 Committee/Finance meeting. It was agreed that a date for this be set. **Clerk**

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

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

35. To receive any reports from working groups

35.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) See 33.4 above.

35.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that a further meeting was scheduled for next week.

35.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that all expected income from adverts had now been received; this edition had just about broken even despite a significant increase in colour printing.

35.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report. See 32.1.1 and 33.3.3.

36. Personnel matters

36.1 (June Council, 24.1) Information re the requirements/procedures to be followed were noted. It was agreed that a separate meeting be convened to progress this. **Clerk**

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

Standing Orders suspended for this item, taken at 8.30pm

37.1.1 Police matters. See 31.6.2 above.

37.1.2 The Museum. See 31.11 above.

37.1.3 Ashwell School Governing Body. Cllr David Short (a school governor in his own right) reported that interviews for a new head, to be appointed from January 2017, were taking place; interim arrangements had been made for the Autumn Term. See also 32.3.2.

37.1.4 (June Council, 26.1.4) Support for local businesses. Cllr Graham Lee gave an update on further discussions with interested parties. He proposed that key individuals be invited to a meeting to present their

proposals as to how the Parish Council could lend its support. It was agreed that Cllr Lee would draft a letter and circulate to all parish councillors for comment.

37.2 Items raised by parishioners.

37.2.1 Parking issues in Silver Street/obstructions preventing access of the NHDC waste/recycling vehicle. The correspondence with the police and NHDC was noted. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had received a number of responses to his item in the July Ashwell Village News. It was noted that requests for yellow lines had again been raised at the last highways meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter (see 32.1.1 above). The situation re 20mph speed limits for villages had also been requested; County Councillor Tony Hunter had confirmed that Herts County Council had not changed its policy re the requirement for signage, engineering measures etc to be included in any such scheme.

37.2.2 Hazard for vehicles when exiting The Dovecote into Back Street due to the proximity/speed of oncoming traffic. The Parish Council's views on installing a mirror were sought. No objections were raised and advice given to contact the relevant landowner.

37.2.3 Grass cutting in Woodforde Close. It had been confirmed that this was a County Council/Herts Highways responsibility.

Meeting closed to the public at 10.05pm 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 38. To be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that it included personnel matters.

Forthcoming meetings

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 3rd August 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 -July 2016					06 July 2016	
			Declarations: None			
Proposed (i) Cllr Legg (ii) Cllr Lee						
			£	£	£	
Receipts			Precept	Grants	Other	
					Total	
25	Football Club	rent rec and pav 2015-16			600.00	600.00
26	Cricket Club	mower (agreed part of total)			2200.00	2200.00
27	Keith Gordon Jeweller	yearbook advert			125.00	125.00
28	QED recruitment	yearbook advert			125.00	125.00
29	personal	burial (cemetery works 16.07)			160.00	160.00
30	SDBrown	yearbook advert			200.00	200.00
31	Santander	bank interest (01/06/16)			11.58	11.58
32	Geere & Pepper Memorials Ltd	memorial (cemetery works 16.08)			100.00	100.00
33	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent			68.75	68.75
34	Rothwells Ltd	yearbook advert			350.00	350.00
Total				0.00	3,940.33	3,940.33
			Admin, office costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
Payments						
By Direct Debit						
64	E.ON (29/06/16)	pavilion electricity		22.23	1.11	23.34
65	E.ON (01/06/16)	chapel electricity		11.00		11.00
66	E.ON (28/06/16)	toilets electricity		12.33	0.62	12.95
By Cheque						
67	P Tuckwell Ltd	cricket mower		5,200.00	1040.00	6240.00
68	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1097.99			1,097.99
69	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	10.44		2.09	12.53
70	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	clerk's pension	402.70			402.70
71	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		202.58		202.58
72	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec		73.20		73.20
73	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	230.00	52.20		282.20
74	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00		30.00
75	Ashwell Youth & Community	room hire 11/05/16	18.00			18.00
76	Business Presentations	Design and layout Ashwell Yearbo	1000.00			1000.00
77	Liberty Co Ltd	deep clean public toilets		250.00	50.00	300.00
78	The CGM Group (East Anglia)	pitch mowing at the rec 10 and 23/05/16		58.14	11.63	69.77
79	D J Granger Grounds Maint. Lt	grounds maintenance worksheet 7		346.00	69.20	415.20
80	D J Granger Grounds Maint. Lt	grounds maintenance worksheet 8		1733.00	346.60	2079.60
81	D J Granger Grounds Maint. Lt	grounds maintenance worksheet 9		170.00	34.00	204.00
82	CPM Playgrounds Ltd	works to playground		7446.00	1489.20	8935.20
83	Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (03/05-03/07)		160.00	32.00	192.00
Total			2,759.13	15721.12	3,074.72	21,554.97
Outstanding Accounts						
E H Crouch Funeral Director interment fee re CW 16.13 (15/04/16)					420.00	
Yearbook 2016 adverts (xl)					65.00	
Total						485.00
Money at bank						
Current Account			05 July 2016		57,137.00	
Deposit Account			03 June 2016		30,403.80	
Total						87,540.80
<i>Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after</i>						2,200.00
<i>Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding</i>						110.99
<i>Total</i>						89,629.81
<i>Total after paying this months cheques</i>						68,074.84
<i>Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques</i>						37,671.04