

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 5th August 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, David Sims.

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

31. APOLOGIES None.

32. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 1st July 2015

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

33. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(See item 34 below for any matters re management of parish assets and amenities)

33.1 (01 July Council, 24.2) Royal Mail post boxes. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that she had updated her list of village post boxes and the stated collection times. She reiterated that the latter were still under review by Royal Mail; she would continue to monitor the situation. It was noted that Royal Mail had issued a statement re retention of post boxes nationally and the protection of those of heritage design.

33.2 (01 July Council, 24.3) Parish Clock/overnight volume reducing device for the quarter chimes. The latest response from the NHDC officer was noted, 'Due to the ongoing nature of the investigation by NHDC, I am unable to release noise monitoring data and locations at this time. Further noise monitoring is due to be arranged...'. The Chairman reiterated that he was continuing to do everything possible to progress the situation but the Parish Council had no control over the procedures followed by NHDC. The supplier of the device was in direct and regular communication with the NHDC officers for testing of the device. Following the first noise monitoring visit the device had been adjusted and a second visit was pending. Due to the lack of access to a property, the NHDC officer was taking measurements from the outside; these were then recalculated to according to set procedures. In response to a question from a parishioner (see 39 below), the Chairman reiterated that avoidance of a Noise Abatement Notice was still the absolute imperative. Although the original six-month trial period had passed, if the Parish Council turned the overnight quarter chimes back on there would be an immediate risk of a Noise Abatement Notice being served; any order served by NHDC would be irreversible.

33.3 (01 July Council, 24.4) Bus services. The responses from the HCC officers to various questions were noted. From 1st September there were to be new contracts for the 202 taxibus to the station (Landmark) and the 90/91 serving Royston/Baldock/Letchworth (Richmonds Coaches); representations had been made re prices, tickets and bus stops. It was noted that parishioner Joan Ridley had expressed her frustration at the confusion over her proposals for timetable amendments to the 90/91 service; the Chairman agreed to look into this. Parishioners Daniel Mathews and Joan Ridley were again thanked for their input.

The statement issued by HCC re reduction in subsidies and consequent changes to service provision was noted; also an email from County Councillor Tony Hunter re rural subsidies.

A proposal for publicity of the new taxibus/202 services from September to encourage useage was agreed.

Clerk

33.4 (01 July Council, 24.6) Herts County Council/Herts Highways responsibilities.

33.4.1 Cllr David Sims reported on the last meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his highways officer; agreed actions had included safety improvements at Odsey/A505 junction, painting of the railings at the Springs, street lighting issues, regular weed-killing, overhanging vegetation and flooding problems in Northfield Road.

The views of the Parish Council had been sought on (i) proposal for section106 money held by HCC to fund traffic/speed surveys at various locations, (ii) proposal for a white line parking restriction on the corner of Hodwell and Swan Street re access problems for large vehicles eg bin lorry. Both were agreed.

Clerk

33.4.2 It was noted that the costs and requirements for the use of flashing speed warning signs had been requested; the Speedwatch volunteer group had discussed this and Station Road had been considered as a possible site for these (see also 38.4). It was noted that concerns re speeding had also been received from a Back Street resident (see also 35.1.5).

33.4.3 Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his concerns re the regulation of works on the highway; he had safety concerns re those outside 30 West End where signage had blocked the pavement.

33.4.4 Cllr David Short expressed his concerns re overhanging vegetation. The works by Herts Highways on the verge adjacent to the school in Bear Lane had been promised for the holiday period but as yet there

were no notices displayed. Overgrown hedges in Cow Lane and the Hinxworth Road continued to be a hazard. In the absence of any response from Herts Highways on these it was agreed that the Parish Council would compile a list of landowners responsible and write to them requesting action. **Clerk**

33.5 (01 July Council, 24.6) Poor broadband speeds/request for information. An interim response from Oliver Heald, MP, was noted; he had contacted HCC for an update.

33.6 (01 July Council, 26.4) From HCC, consultation on Rail Strategy. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/railconsultation. The Chairman thanked Parishioner Daniel Mathews for preparing a response; all were supportive of his views.

34. 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)

34.1 (01 July Council, 25.2) The Pavilion. The Chairman reported on the meeting called to discuss with representatives of clubs who use the parish facilities, the best use of, and responsibilities for, the amenities available. He expressed his disappointment that only two club representatives had attended, both from the Accies. He intended to call another meeting reiterating that without more input from user groups other options for the facilities would have to be considered. Cllr Madeleine Legg offered to contribute on pavilion management matters. **MNW/MFL**

34.2 (01 July Council, 25.1) Public toilets at the Recreation Ground/agreed additional cleaning. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the planned 'deep clean' would take place next week and the situation then reviewed. **MFL**

34.3 (01 July Council, 25.5) Playground/proposal to get users more involved. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that discussion with an interested parishioner to undertake regular monitoring was ongoing. **MFL**

It was reported that the annual RoSPA report had just been received; there were no significant issues and only 'low' and 'very low risk' items recommended for action. It was agreed that the maintenance items be immediately progressed, quotes would be requested for items re grass/surfacing and painting with a view to addressing these later in the season/after the school holidays. **Clerk**

34.4 (01 July Council, 24.5) War Memorial. The agreed plans, including the schedule and financial provision for cleaning, works re the inscriptions and refurbishment of the surrounding hedge were noted. Parish councillors expressed their disappointment at the negative comments from a correspondent that had been published in the August *Ashwell Village News*. The Parish Council continued to be very appreciative of all the volunteer input for the War Memorial as it was for all village matters. This was even more important now that there were only seven parish councillors. Parishioners paid for an agreed level of maintenance for areas such as the War Memorial through their parish pre-cept/council tax that was set by the Parish Council; additional effort by individuals kept these costs down for the benefit of all.

34.5 The Recreation Ground. Recent vandalism to notice boards and toilet doors was noted; the police had been informed and had promised to undertake patrols when resources allowed. Cllr David Short reported that, in his role as a school governor, he would discuss the problem with the new head teacher. Thanks had been sent to the parents who cleared up litter after the end of term celebrations.

34.6 Parish Allotments at Small Gains. Concerns from tenants re proposals from the three sports clubs (Tennis, Cycle and Accies) for a shared pavilion on the site were noted. The Chairman reassured that this was a long-term aspiration and that other options that would not affect the allotments were also being investigated. The Parish Council was obviously supportive of the sports clubs but was also fully aware of its obligations to the allotments' tenants and its duty to provide allotments. It was noted that Cllr David Sims was now the representative for the parish allotments and he had spoken individually to many of the tenants. It was agreed that a further communication be sent to the allotment tenants. **MNW/DRS/Clerk**

In response to the concerns raised by a tenant re the overgrown strip between the plots and the football pitch fence, it was agreed that the matter be investigated.

34.7 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported on a press release from HCC re Ash die-back disease; the local situation continued to be monitored by a resident expert.

The recent vandalism to the litter bin and log seat was noted; the police had promised to undertake patrols when resources allowed.

35. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE AND MATTERS RE OTHER AUTHORITIES

Items from parishioners

35.1.1 (01 July Council, 26.3) Station Road closure for utility connection works at 61 Station Road/Philosphers Gate development. Complaints from residents that no notification had been received from HCC/Herts Highways nor any signage in place giving prior warning were noted.

35.1.2 Complaint from parishioner re dog fouling on Ashwell Street (section of track adjacent top of Foresters Allotments). It was noted that following a request to the NHDC Environmental Crime Officer she had attended, installed warning stickers re prosecution, and spoken to one dog walker. If this is not effective she would return and put up posters.

35.1.3 Reports from parishioners re fly-tipping in Northfields Road and Common Lane. It was noted that the NHDC Environmental Crime Officer had attended and, following investigation, had initiated police action for a warrant.

35.1.4 Requests following flooding due to heavy rainfall. It was noted that contact details had been supplied to residents at West End where houses had been flooded (should be reported to Herts Highways, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency).

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that Herts Highways had attended and alerted that the adjacent land drains might be blocked. He had spoken to the relevant landowners and understood that matters were being progressed.

Contact details for Herts Highways had also been given to parishioners reporting blocked drainage gullies and silt on roads.

35.1.5 Speeding and other concerns in Back Street. Details had been supplied re Drivesafe/Speedwatch and the new HCC criteria for 20mph speed limits. Also contact details for Herts Highways fault reporting and County Councillor Tony Hunter re his Highways Locality Budget.

Items from other authorities

35.2.1 Information re Highways Together (launch presentation supplied by HAPTC). 'A unique partnership between Parish & Town Councils and the Hertfordshire County Council Highways Service.' Parish and town councils are now required to attend risk assessment training and be issued with a 'Letter of Enablement' before they can undertake works on the public highway. Parish councillors expressed their concerns that HCC was the authority responsible for the 'safe and available' upkeep of the highways.

35.2.2 HCC Minerals Local Plan initial consultation. Details on www.hertsdirect.org. Deadline for responses 16th October.

35.2.3 The Hertfordshire Regiment final parade; invitation for Sunday 11th October and request to forward to any interested parties. This had been forwarded to the Ashwell Branch Royal British Legion.

35.2.4 Letter (hard copy) from HCC 'Changes to the East of England Permit Scheme'. Consultation ends 7th August. Details on www.eastofenglandpermitscheme.co.uk/consultation

35.2.5 Email from the Leader of Herts County Council, Robert Gordon, '...annual report 2014/15 giving a summary of what we have done over the year and how we have managed taxpayers' money.'
www.hertsdirect.org/annualreport

35.2.6 Email from new Community Development Officer at NHDC, Susan Hardy.

36. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

36.1 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)

Five applications were considered at a meeting of the Planning Committee 5th August 2015 (7.00pm) (see minutes for details).

36.2 Decisions on applications by NHDC as Planning Authority

36.2.1 Case Ref No: 15/01198/1LB Jessamine House, 15 High Street

Listed Building Consent : Replace existing door on east elevation with window (to match existing casement windows on front elevation) Applicant: Mr G Keightley

NHDC decision: Conditional Listed Building Consent.

36.2.2 Case Ref No: 14/02932/ 1. Sunnymead Farm, Station Road

Full Planning Permission: Six detached 5 bedroom dwellings with detached double garages following demolition of existing poultry houses. New access off Station Road, boundary wall and fencing and

landscaping (as amended by plan 41133 22B and 23 received 17.12.14 & plans 41133 11A, 12A & 23A received 04.02.2015). Applicant: DN and JM Barker.

NHDC decision: Planning Control Committee 25th June; resolved that permission be granted subject to s106 and conditions.

36.3 'Tree(s) in Conservation Area' applications to NHDC as Planning Authority

36.3.1 Case Ref No. 15/01858/1TCA. 4 Lucas Lane.

Reduce x1 Weeping Willow by 28%.

Applicant: The Blue Tree Company (17/07/2015).

36.3.2 Case Ref No. 15/01437/1TCA. 57 Station Road.

Fell 8 conifer trees. Fell 10 broadleaf trees.

NHDC decision: No objection (18/06/2015).

It was noted that concerns had been raised by parishioners; clarification in the form of correspondence from Miller Homes (developer of adjacent site, Philosophers Gate) to the NHDC Planning Officer had been supplied.

36.4 (01 July Council, 27.4) Land adjacent to the Walkdens development (NHDC Case Ref No: 14/00336/1 approved February 2015). It was noted that an update on the monitoring of the development had been received from Parishioner David Price. It was noted that concerns had again been raised re the correct levels and eventual heights of the new houses; although not all were in agreement with these they were being constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

36.5 (Planning Committee, 8th March 2015, item 14) Letter from NHDC Planning Officer informing of amended plans re Case Ref No: 15/00436/1. The Stable, Mill Street Full Planning Permission : Conversion of existing stable building into one 5 bed dwelling and two rear gable end extensions (as amended by plans received 20 July 2015) '...the two storey element has been changed for a single storey addition only with a longer footprint'. It was noted that this was for information only.

36.6 Information from HAPTC re training course, 'How to respond to planning applications', Wednesday 9th September 9.30-12.30 Kimpton Memorial Hall.

36.7 Enquiry from parishioner re social/affordable housing at Philosophers Gate development. It was noted that information had been requested from the NHDC Housing Officer and this had been passed on to the parishioner, ie,

'I can confirm that the housing association is Stonewater and the affordable housing will comprise 5 x 2 bed houses (four x social rent and one for sale on a shared ownership basis) and 2 x3 bed houses (one for social rent and one for sale on a shared ownership basis) as on your attached plan.

Interested parishioners should make sure they are registered on the common housing register and those interested in shared ownership should also register with the help to buy agency for Hertfordshire.

I attach the link to their website for information. <https://www.helptobuyese.org.uk/>.

The priority for those with a local connection had also been reiterated.

Cllr Graham Lee proposed that these details be publicized in the *Ashwell Village News*; Cllr David Short agreed to assist in this.

CDS/Clerk

37. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

37.1 Audit 2014-15. It was noted that the public notice period had now ended (24th June) and the Annual Return and appendices sent to the External Auditor for the audit date of 27th July. Information had been made available on the website and notice board.

37.2 Proposal re quote for the Cemetery tree survey. It was *resolved* that this be accepted.

Clerk

37.3 Proposal re locum clerk service. It was *resolved* that this be accepted.

MNW

37.4 Training. Proposal re HAPTC training courses available.

It was *resolved* that Cllr David Short attend that on mapping. The Chairman would consider his availability re that on employment matters.

CDS/MNW

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

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

Clerk

38. TO RECEIVE ANY REPORTS FROM CURRENT WORKING GROUPS

38.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that 352 responses, 42%, had now been received to the recent housing survey. All were in agreement that this was a good result.

38.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Nothing to report.

38.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Nothing to report.

38.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) See 33.4.2 and 35.1.5 above.

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

(Item taken at 8.30pm; standing orders suspended for members of the public to speak)

39.1 Police matters. See also 34.5 and 34.7 above. Cllr Bridget Macey reported that details of all vandalism incidents and the direct costs of repairs was to be collated; this would be used to reinforce requests for police action. All residents were encouraged to report incidents to the police.

Complaints to the police re the noise from a rave on land adjacent to Bygrave Hill were noted.

39.2 Ashwell School Governing Body. See 33.4.4 above.

39.3 Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr David Short reported that groups who been successful in their bids to the trust had now been informed of the outcome by the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company.

39.4 Items raised by parishioners.

39.4.1 Cllr Madeleine Legg reported complaints from parishioners re street cleaning.

It was noted that details of specific locations should be reported to NHDC as the authority responsible for street cleaning; only a 'top-up' service was provided by the Parish Council's employee.

39.4.2 Cllr Mark White reported complaints from parishioners re advertising signage at West End. Requests had been made to remove it promptly when the relevant time period had finished.

39.4.3 Parishioner Maureen Willatts reported her concerns re parking problems.

39.4.4 Parishioner John Hare reported his concerns re loose gravel on the road following recent heavy rain (see 35.1.4). He also proposed that the Parish Council consider the tourist potential following the discovery of the henge at the Walkdens development site; this would benefit local businesses.

39.4.5 Parishioner Denise Thompson expressed her concerns re the parish clock (see 33.2 above).

39.4.6 Parishioners Jennie and Hamish Davidson expressed their concerns re the allotments at Small Gains (see 34.6).

Meeting closed at 10.00pm

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 2nd September, 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. Training courses on planning, mapping and employment matters.
- SLCC -updates and newsletters.
- Police OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins.

Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT - August 2015			Date	5th August 2015	
Proposed (i) Cllr David Sims (ii) Cllr Graham Lee		Declarations: None.			
		£	£	£	£
		Precept	Grants	Other	Total
Receipts					
48	Santander interest a/c	bank interest		11.19	11.19
49	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent (July)		68.75	68.75
50	Geere & Pepper Memorials	memorial fee (cemetery works 15.23)		100.00	100.00
51	Neville Funeral Service	interment fee (cemetery works 15.20)		320.00	320.00
52	personal cheque	interment fee (cemetery works 15.22)		200.00	200.00
53	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent (August)		68.75	68.75
Total			0.00	768.69	768.69
		Admin, staff costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
Payments					
By Direct Debit					
79	NHDC (20/07/15)	Trade refuse container (rec charity)		85.67	85.67
80	NHDC (05/08/15)	Trade refuse container (S&E)		95.16	95.16
81	E.ON (01/08/15)	chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
By Cheque					
82	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1082.91		1082.91
83	HCC Pensions-LGPS Acc	pension contributions	398.00		398.00
84	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	106.64	17.96	124.60
85	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing	202.58		202.58
86	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec	77.32		77.32
87	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	289.25		289.25
88	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00	30.00
89	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 11		306.00	61.20
90	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 12		405.00	81.00
91	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd	rec pitch mowing (01/06, 16/06)		58.14	11.63
92	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd	rec pitch mowing (29/06)		29.07	5.81
93	DB Sharp & Sons	new cisterniser Gents toilets		243.00	48.60
94	Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (01/06-28/06)		100.00	20.00
95	The Blue Tree Company	tree works at the Springs		85.00	17.00
96	The Play Inspection Comp	RoSPA annual inspection Recreation Ground		62.50	12.50
97	Tyler Arielle Moncrieffe	Data entry Neighbourhood Plan housing survey	216.00		216.00
Total			2,372.70	1,318.71	275.70
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			5th August 2015	58,075.98	
Deposit Account			1st July 2015	30,278.29	
Total					88,354.27
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after					620.00
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding					-
Total					88,974.27
Total after paying this months cheques					85,007.16
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques					54,728.87