

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 1st July 2015 in the Parish Room at 8.00pm**

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

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Two parishioners and District Councillor for the Arbury ward, Janine Paterson (see item 23 below).

21. APOLOGIES Cllr Bridget Macey (away on holiday), Graham Lee (away on business).

22. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 3rd June 2015 and 24th June

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

23. The Chairman welcomed Janine Paterson, the new District Councillor for the Arbury ward, and congratulated her on her recent election. All were positive that the previous good working relationship with the district councillor would continue. It was agreed to determine the name of the district councillor who represented the Baldock & District area on the Planning Control Committee.

24. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(See item 25 below for any matters re management of parish assets and amenities)

24.1 (03 June Council, 14.1) New post office services in Ashwell. To note now open on Monday afternoon (13.00-16.30), Wednesday afternoon (12.30-15.00) and Friday morning (09.30-12.00). Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the new service was continuing to go well; it was being well used.

(see also 24.2 below)

24.2 (03 June Council, 14.2) Royal Mail post boxes. It was noted that there was nothing further to report; information on future collection times was awaited. The importance, particularly for local businesses, of maintaining a good collection service was emphasized.

24.3 (03 June Council, 14.3) Parish Clock/installation of overnight volume reducing device for the quarter chimes. The Chairman reported his understanding that the measuring of noise levels by the NHDC Environmental Officer had been delayed due to problems gaining access to the property of a complainant. He understood that initially access had been refused on the grounds that the bedroom in which recordings were to be taken was occupied by guests; there had since been a refusal for any access. In situations where noise readings could not be taken inside a property, monitoring equipment was positioned externally and readings adjusted. Further information was currently awaited.

It was *resolved* to request that NHDC supply full details of all measurements recorded in their assessments and that the property concerned be identified. **Clerk**

24.4 (03 June Council, 14.4) Bus services/new HCC contracts. It was noted that comments and proposals re the 90/91 Royston/Baldock/Letchworth service and the 202 taxibus to the station had been sent to HCC. Parishioners Daniel Mathews and Joan Ridley were again thanked for their input.

24.5 (03 June Council, 15.5) War Memorial. It was noted that thanks had been sent to the volunteer for his excellent and very commendable efforts in co-ordinating a group to tidy the site and refresh the ornamental planting. It was emphasized that this was a really good example of contribution to the community; the Parish Council's policy was to encourage this.

It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed plans for (i) refurbishment of the hedge (following representations works to be delayed until after Remembrance Sunday 2015), (ii) cleaning (allocated reserve set up in 2014/5 for cleaning and works re inscriptions. Funds for this to come from the parish precept over the next two years. Works to be undertaken in the summer of 2018), (iii) inscriptions (the Ashwell Branch of the Royal British Legion progressing investigations with the help of the Museum to determine whether there are names missing; some believe that there are. If claims are substantiated they will be added following the required approval process. Any re-cutting will be carried out at the same time).

24.6 (03 June Council, 17.1) Herts County Council responsibilities/outstanding requests to County Councillor Tony Hunter including railings at the Springs, street lighting issues and flooding problems in Northfield Road. It was reported that a response had been received just prior to the meeting. With regard to Herts Highways matters a meeting date had been requested. It was noted that the recent grass cutting by the HCC Highways contractor had been particularly badly done. Again some areas had been missed completely; these had been reported and the matter would be taken up again at the proposed meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter. **Clerk**

24.7 (03 June Council, 17.2) Odsey/A505 junction; discussions with Steeple and Guilden Morden Parish Councils. The planned safety improvement works agreed by County Councillor Tony Hunter to be funded

from his Highways Locality Budget were noted. Cllr David Sims reported that he was still awaiting a response to his request for details, particularly timings.

25. 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)

25.1 (03 June Council, 17.4) Public toilets at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported on further communications with the cleaning supplier. It was agreed that her proposals for a deep clean be progressed subject to the estimate being considered satisfactory. She was commended for her efforts and the comprehensive report that she had circulated. **MFL**

25.2 (03 June Council, 20.8) Proposed meeting with representatives of clubs who use parish facilities to discuss the best use of, and responsibilities for, the amenities available. It was agreed that a date be set; Cllrs Mark White and Martin Hoffman to attend. **Clerk/MNW/MGH**

25.3 Cemetery. It was agreed that an estimate for a new tree survey be requested. **Clerk**

25.4 Cemetery. Proposal to commission a digital copy of the Burial Register (1918 to 1946) held at County Hall. Cllr David Short reported that he had obtained an estimate. It was noted that difficulties had arisen where the re-opening of an old grave had been requested; easier access to old records would be preferable. It was agreed that this would be progressed. **CDS**

25.5 Playground. Cllr Legg reported on the proposal to get users more involved. She had made several approaches; initial responses had had been positive and she would report back further. **MFL**

25.6 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the Springhead hedge had been lightly trimmed by a volunteer; the next full professional cut was scheduled for early September. The tree trunk seat had been rolled from the grassed area down into the river by vandals; it would be put back. Young kingfishers had been sighted; an indication that they were nesting locally again.

26. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

26.1 Concerns from a parishioner re poor broadband speeds in Ashwell. It was noted that the Parish Council had previously engaged with the Connected Counties scheme. In the first 'round' of allocations, despite significant local support, the Letchworth exchange had failed to be included in the list of areas to be upgraded. It was understood that further investment was now due to be implemented over the next couple of years. There was concern that even if the local exchange was upgraded this would not necessarily extend to all areas. It was emphasized that an efficient service was of vital importance to rural businesses and communities such as Ashwell. It was agreed to write to Oliver Heald, MP, to request further details and his support in ensuring a good service for Ashwell. **Clerk**

26.2 Concerns from parishioner re poor grass cutting works by HCC contractor in Woodforde Close. Also other reports of areas missed completely. See 24.6 above.

26.3 Notification from HCC/Herts Highways of road closure 20th to 26th July 2015 for utility connection works at 61 Station Road development. '...prohibit all traffic from using that length of Station Road, Ashwell from its junction with Ashwell Street north westwards to its junction with Lucas Lane, a distance of approximately 180 metres, except for access.' Cllr David Sims reported that he had made contact with the developer of Philosophers Gate who had confirmed that the road would have to be closed completely for the installation of a water main; this would take at least 4 days.

26.4 From HCC, consultation on Rail Strategy. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/railconsultation. Deadline for responses 4th August. The importance to the village of a good service at Ashwell & Morden Station was emphasized. It was agreed to request input from an interested parishioner. **Clerk**

26.5 From the Police & Crime Commissioner, consultation on Hertfordshire's Community DriveSafe scheme. Details on www.hertscommissioner.org/community-drivesafe-scheme-hertfordshire. Deadline for responses 2nd July. Cllr Hoffman thanked all who had already responded. See also 29.4 below.

26.6 Giving Time Project, Parish Election survey; research study about the recruitment of councillors in parish and town councils led by University College London. Cllr Madeleine Legg had responded.

26.7 Invitation to Hertfordshire Parish and Town Council Conference; Theme: Community Health and Wellbeing. Thursday 25th June 2015, Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City. It was noted that this had now been cancelled due to poor uptake.

26.8 Invitation from the Chairman of HAPTC, Bill Pryce, to propose any items for him to raise at his meeting with Oliver Heald, MP, Tuesday 30th June.

26.9 From HCC 's Trading Standards team re scams; request to help them identify people across the county who are being targeted by fraudsters. Details on www.hertsdirect.org/tradingstandards and forwarded to *Ashwell Village News*.

27. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

27.1 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)

The applications considered at a meeting of the Planning Committee 24th June 2015 were noted (see minutes for details).

27.2 Decisions on applications by NHDC as Planning Authority

27.2.1 Case Ref No: 15/01058/1. Land south of St Marys Church and rear of 28 High Street, Hodwell.

Full Planning Permission: Single storey front extension, single storey rear extension, external alterations to facilitate conversion of garage block to one 3 bedroom dwelling and detached double garage with ancillary accommodation (variation to Planning application 14/00969/1 granted 17.6.14)

Applicant: Dr and Mrs Rowley Jones.

NHDC decision: Conditional Permission.

27.2.2 Case Ref No: 15/00691/1. Land rear of 39-59 Station Road.

Outline Planning Permission: Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) residential development comprising of 14 dwelling with associated access off Green Lane.

Applicant: Tingdene Developments Ltd.

NHDC decision: Refused by Planning Control Committee meeting Thursday 25th June.

27.2.3 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 meeting Thursday 25th June; outcome not yet known.

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

27.3.1 Case Ref No. 15/01144/1TCA. 18 Springhead.

Crown reduction by 30% of 6 Lime trees (as amended by email received 21/05/2015).

Applicant: Hudson Timber.

NHDC decision: No objection.

27.4 (03 June Council, 16.3) Land adjacent to the Walkdens development (NHDC Case Ref No: 14/00336/1 approved February 2015). The report from Parishioner David Price was noted. Cllr David Sims reported his understanding that the route for vehicles exporting the excavated spoil was now to be via the existing Walkdens rather than Ashwell Street; he expressed his concerns, particularly re the safety of children. It was agreed to request detailed information from the Planning Officer. **Clerk**

28. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting Wednesday 11th March available on website or from the Clerk)

28.1 Audit 2014-15. The following were noted (i) publication of a report including the unaudited statement of accounts on the notice board and website (statutory deadline 30th June), (ii) the dates for the public notice period and (iii) the audit date of 27th July.

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

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

29. REPORTS FROM CURRENT WORKING GROUPS

29.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short; Cllrs Madeleine Legg and Graham Lee also members). Cllr David Short reported. The recent survey sent to Ashwell households had already achieved a 37% response. Information from NHDC was that the housing figures required for inclusion in the District Local Plan had been amended due population changes. Also that the Stevenage plan now included development to the west of the A1; this could have repercussions, some felt of a positive nature, on the numbers of new houses required in North Herts. In response to a question Cllr Short emphasized the importance of a local plan, and Ashwell's Neighbourhood Plan, to give local people more power when planning applications were considered.

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

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

29.4 Speed Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported on proposed procedural changes. He described them as ‘ill thought out’ and noted that volunteer groups in some locations had given up as a result. A meeting is scheduled to discuss this issue.

He was determined that action should be taken against those who regularly drive too fast, and those that have no consideration of pedestrians. As a private individual (ie not as a Speedwatch member) he had taken measurements, using a hand-held device, showing that there was ‘a big problem’ in the village.

Other parish councillors concurred that action was required. It was noted that 20mph speed limits in residential areas were increasingly common and agreed that this be investigated again. Some villages had found flashing warning signs to be successful.

29.5 Clock chimes law changing group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Nothing to report (pending installation of the overnight volume reducing device).

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

This item taken at 8.30pm

Standing orders were suspended for this item for members of the public to speak.

30.1 Police matters. It was noted that the latest Rural News included details of more shed/outbuilding break-ins; these were increasingly a problem.

30.2 Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr David Short reported that representatives of the trustees, the Merchant Taylors’ Company, had visited the village and discussed bids with the school and youth groups in April. As yet none had received any information as to the distribution of funds; he had been in contact to try and ascertain the reasons for this.

30.3 Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that, following a request from the Museum, he had investigated the situation re the waste/recycling bins in Alms Lane. He had determined that the Parish Room, the Parish Council and the Cottage Garden stored their bins there; any local residents should be keeping their bins on their property. Some design proposals were being put together for a storage unit to house the bins and improve the look of the area.

30.4 The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Trustees of the Moss Homes, 20th April 2015, were noted. (Cllr Madeleine Legg is a trustee and reports, as necessary, to the Parish Council)

30.5 HCC/Herts Highways responsibilities (see also 24.6 and 26.2 above). Cllr David Short reported concerns re overgrown hedges along the Hinxworth Road and in Cow Lane. It was noted that these problems had been reported in the past but continued to recur. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported concerns re the very worn white lining at the junction of Back Street and West End. These matters would be added to the list of items for the next meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter; the portfolio holder for Highways would also be kept informed. **Clerk**

30.6 NHDC/Noise complaints. Concerns were received from a parishioner re the forthcoming Farr Festival. Contact details for the relevant officers at NHDC would be forwarded. **Clerk**

30.7 Street cleaning. It was reported that concerns had been received from a parishioner re the poor state of some parts of the village. She was of the view that parishioners should be encouraged to help keep the village looking good by ‘doing their bit’ outside their own properties. It was noted that street cleaning was the responsibility of NHDC; the Parish Council provided a ‘top-up’ to this. Cllr David Short reported concerns particularly at the front and rear of the Rose & Crown. The Chairman agreed to speak to the landlord and request action re the gravel encroaching from the car park and the overhanging vegetation and poor state of the wall at the rear. **MNW**

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 3rd August, 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.

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -July 2015			Date	1st July 2015	
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman	(ii) Cllr Short	Declarations: None.			
		£	£	£	£
Receipts		Precept	Grants	Other	Total
38	Santander interest a/c	bank interest		11.56	11.56
39	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent		68.75	68.75
40	Mr S Chambers	allotment rent		7.50	7.50
41	E H Crouch	interment fee (cemetery works 15.06)		100.00	100.00
42	Neville Funeral Service	memorial fee (cemetery works 15.21)		160.00	160.00
43	Grey's Hairdressing	yearbook advert		70.00	70.00
44	Cricket Club	pavilion/rec rent		850.00	850.00
45	Geere & Pepper Memorial	memorial fee (cemetery works 15.22)		100.00	100.00
46	HMRC	VAT reclaimed for Oct -Mar		1283.72	1283.72
47	EON	credit to account		84.70	84.70
	Total			0.00	2,651.53
		Admin & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
	Payments				
	By Direct Debit				
66	E.ON (01/07/15)	chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
	By Cheque				
67	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1143.48		1143.48
68	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		253.03	253.03
69	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec		57.52	57.52
70	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue		311.85	311.85
71	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00	30.00
72	Ashwell St Mary's PCC	parish room hire 24/06	8.00		8.00
73	British Gas	electricity toilets		34.61	1.73
74	CGM (Cambridge) Ltd	rec pitch mowing (06/05, 18/05)		58.14	11.63
75	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 8		306.00	61.20
76	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 9		324.00	64.80
77	D J Granger	grounds maintenance sheet 10		1,029.00	205.80
78	Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (01/06-28/06)		80.00	20.00
	Total		1,151.48	2,495.15	365.16
	Outstanding Accounts				
	Allotment rents (x1 plot)			7.50	
	Football Club rent (last installment)			335.00	
	Yearbook 2015 adverts (x1 advertiser)			70.00	
	Total				412.50
	Money at bank				
	Current Account		1st July 2015	61,315.90	
	Deposit Account		3rd June 2015	30,255.54	
	Total				91,571.44
	<i>Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after</i>				-
	<i>Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding</i>				760.72
	Total				90,810.72
	<i>Total after paying this months cheques</i>				86,798.93
	<i>Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques</i>				56,543.39