

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ashwell Parish Council held on
Wednesday 3rd June 2015 in the Parish Room at 8.10pm**

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: Seven.

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

13. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING/AGM 13th May 2015

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

14. MATTERS OF REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(Items not covered elsewhere)

14.1 (06 May Council, 142.1) New post office services in Ashwell 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 going well; he was pleased that prompt action had resulted in it being up and running as soon as had been possible. (see also 14.2 below)

14.2 (06 May Council, 143.1) Royal Mail post boxes. Concerns re changes to collection times. It was reported that Cllr Bridget Macey had investigated. Changes had occurred due to the closure of the Ashwell post office but there were also plans for changes nationally. Further information had been requested.

14.3 (06 May Council, 142.2) Parish Clock. The Chairman gave an update on the overnight volume reducing device for the quarter chimes. A test was to be carried out with noise levels being monitored by the NHDC environmental health officer. Once his confirmation had been received that the device was working as intended it would be set up for routine use.

14.4 (06 May Council, 142.3) Bus services. Update on new contractor appointed by HCC from 1st June. Former parish councillor Daniel Mathews and parishioner Joan Ridley were thanked for their continued input. The Ashwell services had now reverted to two separate contracts, Centrebus for the 90/91 service (larger vehicle linking with Baldock, Letchworth and Royston) and the 202 taxibus for shorter trips to and from the station.

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

Parishioner Joan Ridley reported that she had attended a meeting of the bus users' groups (BUG); HCC officers had been present to provide information and answer questions. She understood that timetable changes were being considered and had requested an additional service to Royston. Objections had been expressed on the grounds of cost although the possibility of section 106 funding had been raised.

It was agreed that this should be investigated.

14.5 (13 May Council, 9.2) HCC Inspiring Libraries Strategy. Update on HCC decisions re mobile library services. Cllr David Sims reported that HCC members had voted to withdraw all mobile library services to achieve cost savings. All expressed their regret at this decision; this was yet another example of rural council tax payers receiving no service whilst town residents continued to be supported. It was noted that some villages operated a book exchange.

It was agreed that this would be looked into.

15. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

15.1 From Cambridgeshire County Council re rights of way. Informal Consultation on proposed Seasonal Traffic Regulation Order for Guilden Morden Byways 49 & 51. Cllr David Short reported that he had been in touch with the relevant Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire rights of way officers. Severe damage was being done to the surface by off-road vehicles; the proposals were intended to address this by restricting access. Cllr Short proposed that a response be sent (i) in support of maintaining the surface in a sound condition, (ii) possibly restricting access to all traffic, (iii) possibly installing a gate at the Station Road end (access to the rear of properties to be maintained).

This was agreed.

Clerk

15.2 From NHDC re fly-posting. Request from Enforcement Officer to remind local groups that 'Signs need to be on private land with the land owner's permission and not on highway land or highway street furniture'. The Parish Council's policy on posters was noted, ie local advertising would be tolerated but all material must include a contact and must be removed immediately after the event. The view was expressed that posters that were left long after events exacerbated people's annoyance.

It was agreed that the request from NHDC be conveyed to relevant groups.

Clerk

15.3 From HCC re consultation on their 'Traffic Sensitive Streets' Network/ proposal to use the current gritting routes (pre salted routes) as the traffic sensitive network.

15.4 From NHDC re North Herts Highways Liaison meeting, 2nd June 2015 at Council Chamber, Letchworth. It was agreed that the minutes be requested.

Clerk

15.5 From parishioner re the War Memorial. It was noted that a response had been sent. The matter would be further considered following the meeting to discuss responsibilities (Wed 24th June).

16. REPORT RE PLANNING COMMITTEE

16.1 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)

Following a question, the current procedure for responding to consultations on planning applications from NHDC was discussed. It was agreed that this would continue for the present but would be kept under review.

Applications considered at the meeting of the Planning Committee, 7.30pm 3rd June 2015, were noted. (see committee minutes for details)

16.2 Decisions on applications by NHDC as Planning Authority

The following was noted.

Case ref: 15/00640/1 J Cooke Engineering, Ashwell Street.

Residential development comprising of 5 detached 5 bedroom dwellings following demolition of existing engineering works.

NHDC decision: Refused.

16.3 (13 May Council, 9.1 and 06 May Council, 144.4) Land adjacent to Walkdens development (NHDC Case Ref No: 14/00336/1 approved February 2015).

The public meeting organised by the developer and their building contractor to brief local residents was noted (Thursday 21st May 6-7pm at the Village Hall). Cllr David Short reported that he had attended. Various information had been on display and personnel present to answer questions. It had been confirmed that the vehicle movements required to remove the spoil would be via Ashwell Street and out to the A505. No construction vehicles would use the existing Walkdens for access until a hard standing was constructed on site; this was for health & safety reasons. Once the hard-standing was built vehicles would use the Walkdens access route. Concerns had been expressed at the figures quoted for the amount of spoil to be removed and the number of vehicle movements necessary. Parishioner David Price was investigating and would report back to the Parish Council.

Cllr David Sims reported on the archaeological investigations for the site. As the findings had been more significant than originally anticipated they had been extended both in scope and time; they would now be a '100%'.

17. REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(draft minutes of last meetings available on website: Streets & Environment 29th February; Recreation & Facilities, 13th April; Character Areas, 14th April)

17.1 Herts Highways responsibilities. Outstanding requests to County Councillor Tony Hunter including street lighting issues and flooding problems in Northfield Road. Concern was again expressed that no responses had been received.

17.2 (06 May Council, 145.3) Odsey/A505 junction. Planned safety improvement works agreed by County Councillor Tony Hunter to be funded from his Locality Budget were noted. Concern was again expressed that no responses had been received from him to various requests for information.

Cllr David Sims gave an update on discussions with Steeple Morden Parish Council re safety improvements. The other parish councils involved had reiterated their request that Ashwell Parish Council contribute to the cost of a safety audit.

The view was again expressed that HCC showed a lack of interest over this subject. As emails had not been responded to it was still unknown what plans there were for this junction; only a vague outline had been given by County Councillor Tony Hunter at the first meeting.

It was agreed that it was a lot of money to spend when the outcome was so uncertain and that the previous decision not to contribute would stand.

DRS

17.3 Small Gains allotments. It was noted one full plot was now vacant.

17.4 Public toilets at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had continued to monitor the work undertaken by the cleaning contractor. She noted that the contract specified only a one hour visit once per week. She expressed the view that the Ladies were in a 'just about acceptable' condition but the Gents were not. Whilst some aspects might be addressed by a deep clean her view was that the underlying condition, eg cracked tiles, rotten woodwork, was very poor and a complete

refurbishment should be considered. She had scheduled a meeting with a relevant NHDC officer to obtain some advice and would report back.

17.5 The Springs. Cllr Hoffman reported that tree works and repairs to the handrail had been carried out.

17.6 Rights of way at Arbury Banks. Cllr Hoffman reported that following concerns from a parishioner that ploughing had narrowed the paths, this had been investigated. The widths remained within the required limits.

18. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

(draft minutes of meeting Wednesday 11th March available)

18.1 Audit 2014-15. The report from the Internal Auditor was noted; he had raised no issues.

A proposal was made (i) to approve the Annual Return including Accounting Statements and Governance Statement, (ii) to note the public ‘available for inspection’ period from 29th June to 24th July and subsequent submission to the External Auditor for audit date of 27th July, (iii) to publish the annual report including the unaudited statement of accounts on the notice board and website by 30th June and the audited statement of accounts by 30th September.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Clerk

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

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

Clerk

19. TO RECEIVE ANY REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

19.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the Housing Survey questionnaire had been distributed to all households; over 150 had already been returned.

A report detailing the input from the various group members would be distributed shortly.

19.2 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that there was still no speed monitoring in Station Road or Claybush Road due to builders’ vehicles restricting visibility. He again expressed his frustration at the latest instructions from the Police and Crime Commissioner. All the volunteers were very unhappy with the situation; a meeting was to be scheduled with the local police.

20. 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.

20.1 Village Hall. The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the management committee. The facility was running well; money had recently been spent on upgrading the car park surface.

20.2 Land at West Point. Cllr David Short reported concerns at the damage caused to the grass surface by builder’s vehicles associated with the development in West End. It was agreed that the developer be requested to restore it to a good condition once works had finished.

CDS

20.3 HCC verge responsibilities. Cllr David Short reported his concerns at the overhanging and unkempt vegetation in Bear Lane, Kingsland Way and Cow Lane. Bear Lane was a particular concern given the adjacent school premises. It was noted that County Councillor Tony Hunter has agreed that works would be progressed.

20.4 St Mary’s Churchyard. Cllr David Short reported his concerns that there was a loose tile on the lychgate. Cllr Martin Hoffman noted that this was the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council; the Churchwardens were aware.

20.5 Minutes of a meeting of the trustees of the Moss Cottage Homes were noted.

20.6 District and County Councillor communications. The Chairman reported that the newly elected District Councillor, Janine Paterson, had accepted the invitation to attend the July Council meeting.

Parish councillors expressed their disappointment at the number of outstanding requests and lack of responses from County Councillor Tony Hunter. It was agreed to contact the Leader of the Council and request the reason for this.

Clerk

20.7 Youth matters. The Chairman reported that, following the proposal at the last meeting that a parishioner be approached to report regularly on youth matters, a suitable individual had been approached. She had agreed to report on an ad hoc basis and be consulted as required but could not commit to sending in regular written reports.

20.8 Ashwell Academicals Football Club (The Accies). The three club representatives reported that the club’s success had resulted in an urgent need for additional pitches. There were now over 120 playing members of all ages. FA rules meant that a variety of pitch sizes was needed to accommodate different ages. The existing facilities at Small Gains and the Recreation Ground were fully used; some teams needed to play outside the village. Various options were being considered both for the short and long term.

Parish councillors praised the success of the club both for engaging young people and encouraging sport.

Cllr David Short, as leader of the Neighbourhood Plan working group, reported that provision of good sports facilities for the long-term was one of the topics included.

The Accies representatives put forward the following

(i) At Small Gains, a proposal for the space on Parish Council land to be realigned to provide two pitches. Space within the adjacent Cycle Club area, let from a private landowner, to be used for warm-ups. This would necessitate forming a new access through the hedge adjacent to the allotment area.

(ii) At the Recreation Ground, use by the Accies of the adult pitch currently used by the senior Football Club.

(iii) Green storage unit adjacent to the pavilion. It was noted that this had been purchased some years previously when the club had first been formed to provide additional storage. It was noted that the club had raised concerns earlier in the year that a leaking roof had caused the flooring to rot. The Parish Council had agreed to get the feasibility of repairs assessed but to progress this access was required, ie the unit would have to be emptied.

It was agreed that on site meetings be set up as soon as possible with a small number of representatives from each interested group to discuss the above.

Meeting closed at 9.25pm

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 1st July, 8pm in the Parish Room.

Meeting re roles and responsibilities Wednesday 24th June, 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.

