

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 7th December 2022, at 7pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Vinny Hall, Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman) and David Sims. Cllrs Mark White and Ian Duffy joined the meeting on Zoom.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Al Jacoutot (IT support), District Councillor Tom Tyson, County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Two members of the public were present and three also joined on Zoom.

Following a request from a parishioner it was agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

- 56 **Apologies for absence from parish councillors.** Gemma Allan (ongoing dispensation due to work commitments), Martin Hoffman (unable to log on).
- 57 **Declarations of interest.** None.
- 58 **Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting, 02 November 2022.** Chairman Graham Lee noted that a parishioner had requested a change to the minute, November council 63.4, relating to the complaint they had made. It was agreed that Cllr Mark White would chair the meeting re the approval of that particular minute as he had chaired that part of the November meeting. It was proposed that the minute be approved and the proposal was agreed. Any clarification agreed would be included in these minutes. A proposal was made to approve the other minutes of the November council meeting and this was also agreed. *See also item 63.4 below.*
Action: Clerk/Graham

59 **OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE MATTERS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC**

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak.

- 59.1 Presentation by the agent working on behalf of Manor Oak Homes re their proposed planning application to NHC for residential development on land north of Ashwell Street (between the Ruddery and Lucas Lane). *See the link for more information*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/planning/pre-applications-tha/>

It was reported that this item had been postponed due to persons testing positive for Covid. Chairman Graham Lee reported that a planning application consultation relating to this site had been received from NHC today. *See item 62 Planning Matters below.*

- 59.2 Moss Cottage Homes. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the Parish Council had been informed that a new chairman, Phillida Shaw, had been appointed.

59.3 Parishioner complaint. *See also items 58 above and 63.4 below.* The parishioner reiterated their concerns re the accuracy of the minutes. It was clarified that the formal complaint made in October following various concerns raised earlier in the year, had been passed on to the Monitoring Officer at NHC by the Parish Council and related to the Chairman, the Vice Chairman and the Clerk. The complainant had raised issues about Cllr Cath Connolly (since resigned as a parish councillor) and Cllr Martin Hoffman as they had previously expressed their views in Parish Council meetings on the concerns that had been raised. The complainant was therefore of the view that they were therefore compromised and should not be involved.

59.4 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

59.4.1 Ultrafast Broadband installation by Voneus. Cllr Vinny Hall and parishioner Al Jacoutot reported on their ongoing liaison with the supplier and their contractor AMG. Voneus had now established a communication route with relevant personnel at the County Council. Parishioners concerns re footway blockages and late-night working had been taken up with Voneus who had apologised and assured that this would not recur. Questions from parishioners were/had been answered including: (i) Fibre would be installed to the property boundary or nearest pole and the connection only fully completed once a customer signed up, (ii) Properties on the outskirts of the village were to be included, (iii) Voneus were to share the existing BT conduits and poles where possible, (iv) Issues could potentially arise if there were already too many BT copper connections to a pole and one of these had to be removed to fit the fibre. If a customer wished to revert to a BT contract there could be cost implications if copper lines had been removed, (v) This installation was for broadband and not related to the 5G telecoms mast that had been proposed and refused. *See the link for more information.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/ultrafast-full-fibre/>

59.4.2 Community Land Trust/Community Benefit Society. *See the link for more information including the minutes of the founder members/directors' meeting.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/community-land-trust/>

The draft minutes of the founder members/directors meeting were noted. Parish councillors agreed on the draft publicity; this would be published in the new year giving details of how Ashwell residents and local organisations could become members by purchasing a £1 share. Some residents had already expressed an interest and a members' meeting was to be scheduled for late January at which specific proposals by members would be welcomed. It was noted that the objective was to facilitate any opportunity to acquire land or property as an asset of benefit to the community. A parishioner raised their concerns re 'expectation management' and it was acknowledged that although finances would always be an issue this should not limit thinking.

59.4.3 Request from Hertfordshire County Council for comments on their Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. It was agreed that a response be made objecting to the strategy that assumed residents without off-street parking were able to easily access charging points at workplaces, supermarkets, etc. These were not available in Ashwell or any similar rural community. Neither was land available in the village for a public charging facility.

Action: Graham

59.4.4 Village Hall trustees/re their proposal to change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he had been in contact with the Chairman of the Village Hall trustees and understood that they were minded to consider applying direct to the Charity Commission for their desired change of status.

59.5 Items from our district councillor Tom Tyson. He reported:

59.5.1 Bygrave Solar Farm. Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave. NHC ref. 22/00741/FP. The only update on this was a request in the archaeological report now available for on-site investigations.

59.5.2 NHC consultation on new ward boundaries. Deadline January 9th 2023.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/have-your-say-new-ward-boundaries-proposed-north-herts-council>

The Boundary Commission proposals were contrary to the recommendations of NHC and a report summarising their objections was to be published this coming Friday. The proposals were for a new ward of three members including Ashwell, Weston & Sandon and the new development to the north-east of Baldock. This was contrary to the guidelines for following natural community boundaries.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would discuss its response at the January meeting once the NHC report had been considered. It was also agreed that local residents be made aware and encouraged to respond individually. **Action: Clerk**

59.5.3 NHC planning notification letter to neighbours/amendment to include information on parish councils' role. It was noted that this was intended to better inform residents of the process.

59.5.4 NHC review of the Ashwell Conservation Area. No update to report.

59.6 Items from our county councillor Steve Jarvis. He reported:

59.6.1 Safer routes to the Station/ Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) public consultation. Some 400 responses had been made including a significant number from Ashwell. A report was expected in March. The identification of the section in Hertfordshire as a Priority Route was a significant step forward but the section with real safety concerns, and that required land, was in Cambridgeshire. Some progress had been made to engage with relevant Cambridgeshire personnel and this was continuing. Parishioner Guy Reed reported his ongoing communication with the landowners. It was noted that the Parish Council had previously formally expressed its support in principle that the new footway provision be linked to the landowners' proposed development at Cheyneys Lodge and that this could be reiterated if requested. A parishioner commended the Parish Council's publicity on this.

59.6.2 The Ruddy/update on the request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. HCC had undertaken an informal consultation with local stakeholders and were now at the stage in the process where they were dealing with the objections that had been raised or would decide that they were invalid. This was the usual procedure before moving on to their formal consultation phase. See also 59.1 above.

- 59.6.3 New footway in Station Road as a condition of planning permission for Townsend Meadow. NHC ref. 19/00455/FP. The matter was still in the hands of the developer.
- 59.6.4 Highways works at the War Memorial and in Lucas Lane. These had been commended by local residents and members of the British Legion and noted to be a significant safety improvement. Highways were to address some drainage issues and the Parish Council had agreed to arrange for the seeding of the grassed areas. A few concerns had been/were raised: (i) vehicles turning right from Lucas Lane were cutting across the pedestrian area, (ii) the area was poorly lit. It was agreed that these be looked into. It was noted that the Parish Council was to install a safety barrier on the inside of the new pedestrian entrance to the Rec off Lucas Lane. The contractor was to undertake some remedial works to the verges.
- 59.6.5 Drainage issues. Communications re the Hodwell issues were ongoing and a full investigation would be undertaken by Highways in the next financial year. The major works opposite the garage in Station Road were noted.
- 59.6.6 Liaison meeting with Parish representatives. This had included the need for painting of the bollards and street light columns. As the Highways contractor no longer painted street furniture alternative arrangements and funding were needed.

59.7 Items from working groups.

- 59.7.1 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). Further hedge planting at the Rec. Cllr David Sims reported that three quotes were now in hand. It was agreed to consider progress on this once the budget situation was clearer.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated.

60 **ITEMS OF REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS** None other than 59.2 above and 61 below.

61 **MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS.** *See also Appendix A below.*

- 61.1 Recreation Ground/upgrade of play equipment and Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pavilion. *See the link for more information.* <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/fundraising-for-the/> A meeting with NHC representatives to discuss funding was scheduled for tomorrow (Thursday 8th).
- 61.2 Small Gains/actions on the rabbit problems. Following advice from various sources a quote had been obtained for ferreting. Advice had also stressed, however, that installing rabbit-proof fencing was the preferable option and although initially expensive would be more cost effective in the longer term. Quotes for this were being sought.
- 61.3 RoSPA reports for the Recreation Ground and the Springs. No significant issues had been identified that needed urgent attention.
- 61.4 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance, the Parish Clock and support for the post office service in the Parish Room. A useful meeting with a St Mary's representative had taken place and they were to come back to the Parish Council with some proposals.

62 **PLANNING MATTERS** *See summary in Appendix B below.*

Full documents are available on the NHC website. Put the NHC ref. no. into the planning search box <https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/>

62.1 New consultations received from North Herts Council. Responses to the following were discussed and agreed.

62.1.1 Ashridge Farm Cottage, 7 Ashwell Street. 22/02795/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Single storey front, single storey side (north-west elevation), two storey rear and first floor side (north-west elevation) extension, enclosure of existing carport to form a garage and partial conversion of existing garage to habitable accommodation. Alterations to external wall finishes. It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

62.1.2 High Acre, Partridge Hill. 22/02796/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear orangery extension and side dormer with clock tower; replacement front porch and addition of covered front and side veranda; alterations to the roof by removing the existing hip end to the gable roof and continuing gable end to top of roof; alterations to fenestration and addition of external white timber cladding; alterations to existing garage including enlarged front dormer window and rear roof lights; external landscaping including installation of a swimming pool following demolition of existing single storey rear extension; erection of electric timber gates.

It was noted that two public comments from neighbours had been posted on the NHC website; one neutral and one objection.

Standing orders were suspended for the resident who had objected to speak.

The objection related to privacy issues and a change to the fenestration had been requested. It was noted that a similar concern had been raised by the 'neutral' neighbour.

A proposal was made, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response would be made if the planning officer could assure that adequate changes to the fenestration had been made. **Action: Clerk**

62.1.3 Slip End Farm. 22/02888/PNQ. Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling: Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to four dwellinghouses (2 x 2-bedroom dwellings, 1 x 3-bedroom dwelling & 1 x 4-bedroom) together with associated building operations and the formation of private gardens and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouses.

It was noted that Highways had raised some objections. It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

62.1.1 Slip End Farm. 22/02889/PNQ. Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling: Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to one two-bedroom dwellinghouse together with associated building operations and private garden and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouse.

It was noted that Highways had raised some objections.

It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

62.1.1 6 Springhead. 22/02780/LBC. Listed Building Consent: Replace two pairs of single-glazed doors and single glazed window on rear elevation of later addition with similar timber, double-glazed doors and window.

It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

- 62.1.1 5 Swan Street. 22/02966/FPH and 22/02967/LBC. Full Permission Householder: Erection of front entrance canopy and side elevation porch to include conversion of existing shed into habitable accommodation following demolition of front brick wall. Additional for Listed Building Consent: Internal alterations consisting of replacing existing attic staircase and re-tank the basement.

It was noted that there was no off-street parking but the proposals did not affect the current situation.

It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

- 62.1.1 8 Philosophers Gate. 22.02699.FPH. Retention of detached outbuilding for use as a garden office.

It was proposed, and resolved, that a 'no objections' response be made. **Action: Clerk**

- 62.2 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC.

The 'no objections' responses made prior to deadlines for the following were noted:

- 62.2.1 11 Lucas Lane. NHC ref. 2202847/TCA. Apple – Fell.
62.2.2 44 Station Road. NHC ref. 22/02849/TCA. Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) - 2m crown reduction & 1m crown lift.
62.2.3 69 High Street. NHC ref. 22/02812/TCA. Ash - Reduce 1 branch back behind fence line to suitable growth point by approx. 3m.
62.2.4 52 Back Street. NHC ref. 22/02739/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Sycamore - Reduce back to old pollard points. Reduction up to 5m.

- 62.3 Updates on previous planning applications, developments ongoing. *See 59.4.3 above.*

- 62.4 Hunts Close/new application received. *See also 59.1 above.* Land Between Hunts Ridge and Ashwell House 5, High Street. Full Planning Permission: Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping. NHC ref. 22/03094/FP. It was agreed that an on-site meeting of the Planning Committee [all parish councillors are members] be held on Saturday 7th January at 10am. This would be advertised through the usual channels. **Action: Clerk**

63 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

- 63.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts updated for November. *See also Appendix C below.*

It was proposed, and resolved, that these be accepted.

- 63.2 Proposal from the founder members/directors of the Ashwell CLT Ltd that the Parish Council continue to fund the costs for the time being to include, (i) administration, (ii) room hire, (iii) annual membership of the CLT Network (£75), (iv) Directors' liability insurance (£200). *See also 59.3.2 above.*

It was proposed, and resolved, that the proposal be accepted.

- 63.3 Budget and precept proposals for 2023-24. The new draft document was noted. The final draft would be proposed at the January council meeting pending receipt of information from NHC including the tax base and CTRS grant.
- 63.4 Complaints from a parishioner. *See also item 58 above.* It was reported that a further complaint had been received relating to the actions of the Clerk. It was noted that an acknowledgement had been received from the NHC Monitoring Officer following the decision at the November council meeting that the earlier formal complaint received on 6th October re the Chairman, Vice-chairman and the Clerk be referred to them. It was suggested to the complainant that they should take up their further complaint directly with the NHC Monitoring Officer.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Forthcoming meeting dates: January Council Wednesday 04, 7pm.

Appendix A: Additional notes re premises management.

Pavilion electricity/replacement of faulty meter completed and dialogue with supplier ongoing.
Pavilion/works to roof and gutters pending.

Litter bins/ review ongoing to assess whether re-locating any would be beneficial.

New seat at the Rec/pending replacement fittings from the supplier.

Small Gains water supply upgrade/pending quotes.

Springs tree works/pending budget review.

Regular tree surveys/professional reports pending.

Appendix B: Planning Summary

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 07 December 2022				
To view all the documents relating to an application put the NHC reference number into the planning search box https://pa2.north.herts.gov.uk/online/applications/				
Address	Application ref. Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC response to NHC consultation (see also minute reference)	North Herts Decision
8 Philosophers Gate	22/02699/FPH	Retention of detached outbuilding for use as a garden office.	December Council 62.1.7 No objection.	Pending
5 Swan Street	22/02966/FPH and 22/02967/LBC	Erection of front entrance canopy and side elevation porch to include conversion of existing shed into habitable accommodation following demolition of front brick wall. Additional for Listed Building Consent: Internal alterations consisting of replacing existing attic staircase and re-tank the basement.	December Council 62.1.6 No objection. Lack of off-street parking noted.	Pending
6 Springhead	22/02780/LBC	Listed Building Consent: Replace two pairs of single-glazed doors and single glazed window on rear elevation of later addition with similar timber, double glazed doors and window.	December Council 62.1.5 No objection.	Pending
Slip End Farm	22/02888/PNQ	Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling: Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to four dwellinghouses (2 x 2-bedroom dwellings, 1 x 3-bedroom dwelling & 1 x 4-bedroom) together with associated building operations and the formation of private gardens and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouses.	December Council 62.1.4 No objection.	Pending
Slip End Farm	22/02889/PNQ	Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling: Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to one two-bedroom dwellinghouse together with associated building operations and private garden and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouse.	December Council 62.1.3 No objection.	Pending
High Acre, Partridge Hill	22/02796/FPH	Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear orangery extension and side dormer with clock tower; replacement front porch and addition of covered front and side veranda; alterations to the roof by removing the existing hip end to the gable roof and continuing gable end to top of roof; alterations to fenestration and addition of external white timber cladding; alterations to existing garage including enlarged front dormer window and rear roof lights; external landscaping including installation of a swimming pool following demolition of existing single storey rear extension; erection of electric timber gates.	December Council 62.1.2 No objection on the assumption that the fenestration was to be amended.	Pending
Ashridge Farm Cottage, 7 Ashwell Street	22/02795/FPH	Full Permission Householder: Single storey front, single storey side (north west elevation), two storey rear and first floor side (north west elevation) extension, enclosure of existing carport to form a garage and partial conversion of existing garage to habitable accommodation. Alterations to external wall finishes.	December Council 62.1.1 No objection.	Pending
32 West End	22/02163/FPH Further amendments	Two storey side extension to include integrated garage following demolition of existing side extension and existing detached garage.	November Council 54.1 No objection.	Permission granted 17/11/2022
Slip End Farm, Royston Road	22/01541/FP AMENDED	Replace existing entrance gates with acoustic gates, decommission existing vehicular access and install protective landscape bund to boundary.	October Council 46.1.3 No objection	Pending
Spring House 7 High Street	22/02161/FPH and 22/02062/LBC	Replace three existing front elevation gates.	PC to NHDC: No Objection September council, 39.1.2	Pending
Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP (amendments to original)	Erection of two detached dwellings (1 x 2 bed and 1 x 4 bed) including alterations to existing vehicular access (amended plans received 16.06.2022).	PC to NHDC: Objection July council, 25.1.1	Pending
Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	Full Planning Permission: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.	PC to NHDC: Objection June Council, 18.1.4	Pending
Meadow View, Loves Lane	21/01745/FP	Erection of one detached 2-bed dwelling including creation of new vehicular access off Loves Lane, landscaping and ancillary works.	PC to NHDC: Objection	NHDC -Refused Appeal to the Inspector: Permission granted 08/09/2022

Appendix C: Accounts Summary November 2022

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st November 2022				
RECEIPTS				£
48	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest November)		68.75
49	E H Crouch	Cemetery - ashes interment CW22.27		150.00
50	Parishioner	Cemetery -reservation of Burial Rights CW22.31		660.00
51	Santander	Reserve Account Interest		8.53
			Total	£887.28
PAYMENTS		£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
154	M Huggins	Works to seat and bins at the Rec and Springs and new	450.00	450.00
155	St Mary's PCC	Parish Room hire meeting 11/10/2022	15.30	15.30
156	St Mary's PCC	Parish Room hire meetings Jan to Dec 2023	244.80	244.80
157	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Nov)	25.00	30.00
158	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables Oct Inv No 2446	213.00	213.00
159	The Play Inspection Co	RoSPA inspections Rec and Springs	145.00	174.00
160	Wrigleys Solicitors LLP	Professional services re Ashwell CLT Ltd	650.00	780.00
161	Sigma Office Ltd	Supply laptop, set up and data transfer	1,132.50	1,359.00
162	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Hedge maintenance 02/11/2022 inv23122	1,328.00	1,593.60
163	BT	Office telephone and broadband	146.18	175.41
164	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary including back pay award from 1st April	1,191.88	1,191.88
165	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	1,021.43	1,021.43
166	Clerk	Clerk salary including back pay award from 1st April	1,948.30	1,948.30
167	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	156.40	156.40
168	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	269.60	269.60
169	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	1,102.08	1,102.08
170	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables November Inv No 2446	190.00	190.00
171	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting on Rec 25/11/2022 Inv No 10529	127.50	127.50
172	St Mary's PCC	Parish Room hire meeting with Voneus 22/11/2022	10.20	10.20
173	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Repairs to Ladies toilet	70.00	70.00
174	CP Associates	HR consultancy advice	197.50	197.50
		Sub-totals	10,634.67	685.33
			Total	£11,320.00
MONEY AT BANK				
		Current Account 30/11/2022	£26,607.00	
		Reserve Account 30/11/2022	£52,824.95	
		Total cash	£79,431.95	