

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1st June 2022, 8pm, at the Parish Room.

Present: Parish Councillors Gemma Allan, Graham Lee (Chairman) and Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman) and David Sims. Cath Connolly, Martin Hoffman and Mark White joined on Zoom (CC - other commitment, MH- medical appointment, MW- other commitment).

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter). District Councillor Tom Tyson joined on Zoom. County Councillor Steve Jarvis had sent apologies. Seven members of the public were present and eight also joined on Zoom.

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

Standing Orders were suspended for some parts of the meeting to allow members of the public to speak.

13 Apologies for absence from parish councillors: none.

14 Declarations of Interest: none.

15 Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2022.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Graham

16 OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE MATTERS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC

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

16.1 Items from members of the public.

16.1.1 Voneus Broadband proposals for high-speed fibre internet. It was reported that this new provider had commenced installation of boxes and cabling to facilitate their service; an alternative to BT. It was emphasised that this was a separate exercise from the planning application for a mobile phone mast (*see item 18.1.3 below*).

16.1.2 Complaints re noise nuisance from aerobatics. It was reported that some five complaints had been received from parishioners. The central government guidelines on 'how to complain about light aircraft' had been sent to them. It was understood that the recent increase in activity was linked to Fowlmere airfield and contact details had also been provided. A parishioner also wished to note the ongoing noise problems associated with commercial aircraft overflying the village.

16.1.3 Jubilee street party. It was reported that the two parishioners who were organising the event had 'all in hand'. Cllr Norton Mahy, who had been supporting them, reported on the arrangements for tables and chairs and answered questions in relation to this and the weather.

16.1.4 Bygrave Woods events. A parishioner reported that he had received a letter from the organisers giving information about the plans for this year and requested what the Parish Council was aware of. Chairman Graham Lee responded that, through regular reports and communications with our District Councillor Tom Tyson, this had been an ongoing matter since issues with an event last year (*see item 16.2 below*).

16.1.5 Recording of meetings. A parishioner requested whether it was possible to ask why another parishioner had wished to record the meeting. It was noted that the rules required parish councils to facilitate the recording of their meetings if a request was made; there was also a requirement to announce that a recording was being made.

16.2 Items from our District Councillor Tom Tyson.

16.2.1 Bygrave Woods events. He had attended a site meeting with representatives of the landowner, the events organiser and a complainant from Bygrave. Concerns had been expressed at the increased number of events planned. This year there would be two multi-day festivals and two one-day events. Assurances had been given that noise management plans would be in place; the transport issues that occurred last year had also been addressed. He was of the view that any previous goodwill from residents of the local villages to tolerate a once-a-year event was dropping with the increase. He agreed to write some notes with information that could be used in publicity to local residents. A parishioner made an offer to allow access to his land by NHC enforcement officers monitoring noise levels.

16.2.2 Route to the station safety improvements. He was scheduled to discuss this again with County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

16.2.3 Townsend Meadow development/planning condition to include a new section of footway. He understood from the NHC enforcement team that they wished to avoid the costs of litigation and were negotiating with the developer.

16.2.4 Boundary Commission review of North Herts. This had now commenced and was likely to result in some changes to better reflect the numbers of residents in some areas; natural boundaries would also be taken into account. This was unlikely to affect the Arbury Ward.

16.2.5 Bygrave solar farm. The deadline for responses to the public consultation was Friday 3rd June (*see also 18.1.4 below*).

16.3 **Items from our county councillor Steve Jarvis.** Chairman Graham Lee reported that Cllr Jarvis had given apologies but had sent a written update. (i) The order had now been made to extend the 20mph limit at West End and the removal of the old end of limit signage requested. (ii) Work was still proceeding on the possible Recreation Ground entrance in Lucas Lane; determining exactly where some BT cables ran was delaying this a little. (iii) He had requested locations for some additional 20mph signs in Kingsland Way to be identified. (iv) The many potholes in the A505 between Royston and the Odsey turning were supposed to be fixed next week.

16.4 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

- 16.4.1 Village Hall trustees/re their proposal to change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council. This was ongoing.
- 16.4.2 Community Land Trust/Community Benefit Society. Chairman Graham Lee reported further liaison with the solicitor; the application for review by the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) and the list of objects had been drafted. To meet the FCA requirements there needed in the first instance to be three individuals appointed as Member directors. It was proposed that two of these be parish councillors (the Chairman and Vice-chairman) and one an independent. The latter position was to be advertised; the criteria would be that they were over 18 and an Ashwell resident. Given the nature of the legal process to set up the CLT to acquire land and other assets for the benefit of the community, the individual would require certain skills. He emphasised that this venture was 'for the village'. It was proposed that the final drafts of the documents would be publicized and the Member directors be approved at the next Parish Council meeting.
- 16.4.3 Assets of Community Value/nominations to NHC. This was ongoing.
- 16.4.4 The Ruddery/request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the HCC officer had left and was being replaced. There were no further updates.
- 16.4.5 NHC review of the Ashwell Conservation Area. Chairman Graham Lee reported that all relevant documents had been sent to NHC. It was not yet known how and what NHC proposed to do; District Councillor Tom Tyson was keeping the Parish Council updated.
- A parishioner made a request to speak and noted that the agenda item 19.4 (To note the concerns raised by a parishioner re governance and other issues and the response given) probably referred to himself. He was of the view that the Parish Council misunderstood a point he had made in his recent email, 'the doctrine of improper purpose'; this was a legal term that applied to all statutory authorities. He believed that the Parish Council had breached the doctrine of improper purpose. Cllr Norton Mahy responded that the Parish Council had understood and believed that it had not acted improperly. The parishioner was requested, should he feel that he wished to pursue this, that he clarified in writing to the Parish Council in what way he believed it had acted in 'improper purpose'.
- 16.4.6 Defibrillators. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the Accies had obtained two additional units for the village. One would be installed at the pavilion and the other in the Small Gains area. Investigations re the latter were ongoing to determine a suitable electricity supply.
- 16.4.7 Dog waste and trespass/damage issues at Partridge Hill. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the farmer had removed the bin. It was understood that he intended to install signage to restrict access and encourage dog owners to keep to the footpaths rather than use the fields.
- 16.4.8 Co-options. A parishioner made a request for information about the agenda item 19.5 (To agree the proposed procedures to be adopted and agree co-options). Chairman Graham Lee reported that a document had been drafted to cover the process by which co-options would be handled; this was scheduled for approval

later in the meeting. Following this there would be a formal vote on the co-option for one new member; there were also two others that were to be considered.

16.5 Items from working groups.

16.5.1 Village Sports Day (leader Guy Reed). Chairman Graham Lee reported that he had attended the event and was of the view that it was well-attended and well-organised. It was agreed to write to Guy Reed commending his leadership of the organising group.

16.5.2 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported that the new hedge and trees at the Rec were being watered as necessary. He was commended for the successful grant obtained as part of the 'Queen's Green Canopy' Jubilee celebrations. A parishioner requested information on the height that the hedges would be allowed to grow. As this was a play area they would be maintained at a level to ensure sightlines in and out of the space.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated.

17 MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS.

17.1 Recreation Ground/new equipment for older children. Nothing further to report.

17.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion upgrade project/meeting with users' representatives. Chairman Graham Lee reported that he and Cllr David Sims had met with users to discuss various issues. (i) Re wear and tear of the surfaces. Users had been requested to provide information on their use of the surfaces so that future maintenance needs could be determined. (ii) Re proposals for the pavilion upgrade. The latest design proposals had been positively received; comments on the provision of storage and toilets would be conveyed to the architect.

17.3 Small Gains. This had been covered at the same meeting as in 17.2 above. Damage caused to the pitches, and the allotments, by the increasing number of rabbits had been discussed. It was noted that the burrows were in the adjacent old orchard. It had been agreed that the Parish Council would try to make contact with this landowner, and others adjacent, to discuss methods of control. A question was asked about any liability due to damage to the pitches; the maintenance of the pitches and the responsibility for their use was a matter for the Accies.

17.4 The Springs. Chairman Graham Lee reported on behalf of Cllr Martin Hoffman. A date for the installation of fencing to protect vegetation was pending. New litter bins had been ordered. The Greening Ashwell group was now involved in organising volunteer working parties.

18 PLANNING MATTERS

18.1 New consultations received from North Herts Council.

18.1.1 **No. 91 High Street.** NHC ref. 22/01326/FPH and 22/01327/LBC.

Single storey rear extension, erection of detached store and erection of rear garden boundary wall following demolition of existing detached outhouses.

https://documentportal.north-herts.gov.uk/GetDocList/Default.aspx?doc_class_code=DC&case_number=22/01327/LBC

It was noted that no comments had been received from neighbours nor any posted on the NHC website.

Cllr Norton Mahy noted that Neighbourhood Plan policies re heritage and visual impact were relevant but he considered there were no issues. As this was a Listed Building there would be input from the NHC Conservation Officer.

A proposal was made that 'no objections' be conveyed to the NHC planning officer.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

18.1.2 Land east of 35 Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 22/01191/S73

Section 73 Application: Variation of Condition 2 (layout and external alterations) of planning permission 20/02309/FP granted 08.12.2020

https://documentportal.north-herts.gov.uk/GetDocList/Default.aspx?doc_class_code=DC&case_number=22/01191/S73

It was noted that no comments had been received from neighbours nor any posted on the NHC website.

A proposal was made that 'no objections' be conveyed to the NHC planning officer.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

18.1.3 Land Opposite 41, Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 22/01395/TD Telecommunications Determination: Proposed 5G telecoms installation including H3G high street pole c/w wrap-around cabinet and 3 further additional equipment cabinets.

https://documentportal.north-herts.gov.uk/GetDocList/Default.aspx?doc_class_code=DC&case_number=22/01395/TD

Chairman Graham Lee invited parishioner Al Jacoutot to provide technical information where possible. The differences between this and the previous application were the reduction in the height of the mast, down to 15m from 18m, and possible differences in the cabinets. In response to questions the following were noted; (i) Previous attempts to work with the applicant and suggest other locations had not been successful. (ii) In some cases providers had added additional equipment following installation but it was felt unlikely in this case. (iii) The extent of the 5G signal would be shorter than 4G but the proposed mast had provision for both.

It was noted that the objections expressed previously remained, ie adverse visual impact on a Conservation Area and highways safety concerns.

A proposal was made to echo the reasons given by NHC in their refusal of the previous objection, ie 'By reason of its siting and appearance, the proposed

telecommunications apparatus would have a visually harmful effect on designated heritage assets and the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, the development would harm the safe operation of the public highway by reason of its siting.'

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

18.1.4 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.

<https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R8OW8OLKK8000>

Chairman Graham Lee noted that there were a high number of objections posted on the NHC website from Ashwell residents. Key objections that had been made were the loss of grade 2 farmland and the harmful visual impact on the landscape. The area was in the Landscape Character Area of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and covered by relevant NPPF policy. Many local residents had expressed the view that whilst they were in favour of renewables this was the wrong location for a solar farm. The adverse impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Arbury Banks was also cited.

Although the site was not in the Parish of Ashwell, it was immediately adjacent, and included Arbury Banks, and formal consultation had been requested through District Councillor Tom Tyson. NHC had agreed that Ashwell Parish Council be given the opportunity to present its views to the Planning Control Committee; the date for this was yet to be determined.

A proposal was made to respond to the NHC consultation based on the objections noted, ie loss of grade 2 farmland and harmful visual impact on a character landscape.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Clerk**

18.2 Updates on previous planning applications, developments ongoing.

18.2.1 Meadow View, Loves Lane. Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate APP/X1925/W/22/3290692 NHC ref. 21/01745/FP

Erection of one detached 2-bed dwelling including creation of new vehicular access off Loves Lane, landscaping and ancillary works.

https://documentportal.north-herts.gov.uk/GetDocList/Default.aspx?doc_class_code=DC&case_number=21/01745/FP

It was agreed that no amendments be made to the response previously made to NHC. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

19 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

19.1 Monthly summary of accounts.

It was proposed that these be accepted.

Action: Clerk

19.2 The policies on the website and included with the annual audit documents were reviewed. No amendments were proposed. It was agreed to consider whether additional documents be placed on the website.

Action: ALL

19.3 Annual Audit for the financial year 2021-22. The following were noted:

(i) The documents supplied to the Internal Auditor.

(ii) Arrangements and dates for the exercise of public rights.

(iii) Arrangements and dates for the submission to the External Auditor.

19.3.1 Proposal to approve Section 1/Annual Governance Statement.

It was resolved that this be approved and signed subject to no significant issues being raised by the Internal Auditor.

Action: Clerk

19.3.2 Proposal to approve Section 2/Accounting Statements and to note the basic documents to accompany the Annual Return to the External Auditor (Bank Reconciliation, Explanation of significant variances, Notice of the period of public rights).

It was resolved that this be approved and signed subject to no significant issues being raised by the Internal Auditor.

Action: Clerk

19.4 To note the concerns raised by a parishioner re governance and other issues and the response given. *See item 16.4.5 above.*

19.5 Co-options. *See also item 16.4.8 above.* A proposal was made that the procedures drafted be adopted.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk

It was agreed that due to the sensitive nature of the matter, ie legal and financial matters, that further discussion would be held in camera, ie with the public excluded from the meeting.

[Standing order 10.i. 'to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest']

The Chairman reported that minutes of the in camera part would be made public after the meeting.

[Minute in camera session]

The meeting was closed to the public at 9.30pm.

It was **proposed** that Ian Duffy, in line with the process now adopted, be co-opted to the Parish Council with effect from the next meeting.

It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted (unanimous).

Action: Clerk/Graham

[End of in camera session]

The meeting was closed at 9.40pm

Forthcoming meeting dates: Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 6th July 2022

APPENDIX A: Accounts Summary

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st May 2022					
RECEIPTS				£	
17	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (May)		68.75	
18	Allotment tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plots		40.00	
19	Crumps Butchers	Advert for Yearbook 2022		140.00	
20	Mantles of Biggleswade	Advert for Yearbook 2022		325.00	
21	Allotment tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 12a		10.00	
22	Bradleys Hairdresser	Advert for Yearbook 2022		140.00	
23	Allotment tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 4b		10.00	
24	Santander	Reserve Account Interest		1.39	
			Total	£735.14	
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
24	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	Annual membership	40.00		40.00
25	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables inv2381	247.50		247.50
26	Ashwell Youth and Community Centre	Village Hall rent for meeting 06/04/2022	21.63		21.63
27	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (April)	25.00	5.00	30.00
28	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet no 4, inv no 22424	424.00	84.80	508.80
29	Ashwell Housing Assoc	Office rent Apr-Sept	475.20		475.20
30	Ashwell PCC (St Mary's)	Parish Room hire meetings May to December	96.00		96.00
31	Horne Builders	Repairs to toilets	40.00		40.00
32	J Porter	Reimbursements to Clerk	73.34	13.03	86.37
33	The Blue Tree Company	Tree Works at St Mary's Churchyard	1,160.00	232.00	1,392.00
34	Eco Green Communities Ltd	Litter bins for the Springs x3	1,344.05	268.80	1,612.85
35	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting on Rec, 27/04/2022 Inv 9929	127.50		127.50
36	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting on Rec, 06/05/2022 Inv 10009	127.50		127.50
37	Legal & General	Herts Pension Fund III Health Liability Insurance	563.82		563.82
38	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet no 5, inv no 22457	750.00	150.00	900.00
39	British Telecom	Office landline and broadband	128.85	25.77	154.62
40	EON Next	Electricity for Public Toilets inv 01/04 -30/04	13.34	0.67	14.01
41	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,428.36		1,428.36
42	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	899.53		899.53
43	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	244		244.00
44	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	156.4		156.40
45	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	Tax&NI to Inland Revenue	575.10		575.10
46	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	775.47		775.47
47	Powerscribe/MCL	Managed Website Hosting	120.00	24.00	144.00
48	Ruggles Plumbing & Heating Ltd	Pavilion -clear drains blockage Invoice Inv 1859	120.00	24.00	144.00
		TOTAL			£10,804.66
	MONEY AT BANK	Current Account 31/05/2022			68,939.89
		Reserve Account 31/05/2022			20,706.01

Signed

Date

APPENDIX B: Planning summary

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHDC up to 8th June 2022				
Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
91 High Street	22/01326/FPH and 22/01327/LBC.	Single storey rear extension, erection of detached store and erection of rear garden boundary wall following demolition of existing detached outhouses.	PC to NHDC: No Objection	Pending
Land east of 35 Ashwell Street.	22/01191/S73	Variation of Condition 2 (layout and external alterations) of <u>planning permission 20/02309/FP granted 08.12.2020</u>	PC to NHDC: No Objection	Pending
Land Opposite 41, Ashwell Street.	22/01395/TD	Telecommunications Determination: Proposed 5G telecoms installation including H3G high street pole c/w wrap-around cabinet and 3 further additional equipment cabinets.	PC to NHDC: Objection	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	Pending
87 Back Street	22/01126/FP & 22/001127/LBC	Replace existing garage doors with a window to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation and refurbish existing front elevation door.	PC to NHDC: Objection	Pending
Valentine House, Partridge Hill	22/00934/S73	Section 73 application to remove condition 3 which restricts permitted development rights (Class E), as imposed on the original planning permission reference 94/00713/1 granted on 21.06.1994 for detached 4 bedroom dwelling with double garage.	PC to NHDC: neutral, insufficient information supplied for the PC to make comment	Pending
Land Adj to 4 Ashwell Street	22/00880/FP	Erection of a detached 3 bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land Adjacent To 4, Ashwell Street	22/00880/FP	Erection of a detached 3-bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Quarry Hills Barn, Loves Lane	22/00641/FPH	Addition of ground mounted solar panels in garden, to exceed area of 9m2 that could be added under permitted development. Addition of 16 panels 1x1.5m along hedgerow to the East, occupying 4x10m area, max height 1.5m. Electrical connection to existing fusebox via trench under garden. Not visible from property entrance.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land to the West of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP	Erection of 2 detached dwellings (1 x 2 bed & 1 x 4 bed) including alterations to existing vehicular access	PC to NHDC: Objection	Pending

Signed

Date