

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 01 March 2023, at 7pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Nikki da Costa, Vinny Hall, Martin Hoffman, Norton Mahy (Vice -chairman and Chairman for the meeting) and David Sims. Cllr Mark White joined the meeting on Zoom.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Sarah Mitchell *see 83.5 below*), District Councillor Tom Tyson. County Councillor Steve Jarvis joined on Zoom. Three members of the public were present and four also joined on Zoom for parts of the meeting.

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

- 77 **Apologies for absence from parish councillors.** Gemma Allan (ongoing dispensation due to work commitments), Ian Duffy (other commitment), Graham Lee (away).
- 78 **Declarations of interest.** None.
- 79 **Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting 01 February 2023.** It was agreed that these be signed. **Action: Clerk**

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

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

80.1 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

80.1.1 Ultrafast Broadband installation by Voneus. Cllr Vinny Hall gave an update on the ongoing actions to address various issues. The telegraph pole by the Church in Mill Street had eventually been removed by the contractor; a road closure would be necessary for them to complete the works at this location. Complaints from Woodforde Close residents were being taken up with Voneus; there was a legal obligation for them to leave sites in an acceptable state. It was felt that the outage in Fordham Close could have been better handled by Voneus.

80.1.2 Community Land Trust. *See the link for more information* <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/> It was reported that further publicity was planned.

80.1.3 20's plenty school poster campaign with local police. It was reported that our PCSO Chris Brabrook was scheduled to hold a session later in the month with the pupils at the school who had participated in the poster design. Following this the village-wide poster campaign would commence.

80.1.4 Village Hall trustees/re their proposal to change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and any future involvement of the Parish Council. Nothing further to report.

80.2 Items from members of the public and village organisations.

80.2.1 Museum/proposal re brown tourist sign. It was noted that this had been proposed in the past but had not been progressed. Following discussion it was agreed that the Parish Council would be supportive in principle of any request Ashwell Museum made to Herts Highways.

80.2.2 Ashwell Springs/festival proposal. It was noted that a proposal had been received from a parishioner (Harry Jenkinson); this had been circulated. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had discussed the proposal with the author and was most impressed and proposed that the Parish Council express its support in principle, subject to further details in order to make a final decision. This was agreed and it was requested that the Parish Council be kept informed as the project progressed.

80.2.3 Concerns re speeding traffic. It was reported that several communications had been received from local residents including some suggestions for possible actions, eg speed bumps, volunteer speed monitoring groups, etc. It was noted that speed bumps and other engineering works were an emotive issue that had been firmly rejected during village-wide consultations some years ago. A view was expressed that concerns remained re noise and vibrations. However, there was also a comment that speed bumps were the only effective response to speeding. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had led a volunteer speed monitoring group for many years and although very supportive of the local police, he was critical of the changes introduced by senior Herts police that had made previous actions unviable and the group had ceased to action. It was felt that setting up a new group could be investigated. *See also 80.3.1 below.*

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

80.3.1 Speeding traffic concerns. He had met with the Royston Neighbourhood Police team and discussed the current arrangements for volunteer speed monitoring groups. There had been changes since the previous group was disbanded. He suggested that a combined group covering all five local villages be considered; the issues were similar, the pool of potential volunteers would be greater and the speeding drivers probably common across the district. It was agreed that PCSO Chris Brabrook be contacted to advise on what was involved to set up a volunteer group. **Action: Clerk**

80.3.2 Local policing priorities. He had attended a meeting organised by the Royston team to discuss this. The police team had noted that in the rural areas burglary from sheds and outbuildings was a greater issue than household burglary. Drug-related crime was also less of a priority. Speeding was an issue in all of the villages and he had asked for clarification on the enforcement of 20mph zones.

80.3.3 Bygrave Woods festivals. He had spoken to the landowner and had ben told that only one music festival, in August, had been proposed for this year and it was not yet certain whether this would go ahead.

80.3.4 Footway enforcement in Station Road. *See also 80.4.2 below.* He would raise this again with the NHC Planning Dept.

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

- 80.4.1 The Ruddy. Update on the request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. The rights of way team at the county council was still processing the comments received from their informal consultation.
- 80.4.2 New footway in Station Road as a condition of planning permission for Townsend Meadow. NHC ref. 19/00455/FP. *See also 80.3.4 above.* He had chased up the relevant HCC officers but had been told that they had not yet been contacted by the developer's lawyers. Formal enforcement action by the NHC Planning Dept might need to be considered at some stage.
- 80.4.3 Hodwell drains update. A meeting had been held on site with local residents and an agent from Ringway, the Highways contactor. Ringway were to schedule further action to clear the pipework in April and verge/kerbing works were planned. Following the meeting the Parish Council had contacted the two other local landowners to request their input and any action required on their land. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he had met with the owner of The Old Rectory who had requested a specification of what was required and guidance on how frequently works would need to be carried out; this would be passed on to Ringway. St Mary's Church had also been contacted and had responded that they would pursue any information available. Herts Highways will look at other actions, should the measures described not provide a satisfactory solution in the longer term. The Parish Council would also contact NHC re their street cleansing responsibilities as the lack of clearance of fallen leaves and other debris was a contributing factor.
Action: Clerk

A local resident of many years reported that problems had existed for a very long time and he expressed his frustration that they remained unresolved. Cllr Martin Hoffman endorsed this view and was hopeful that finally the correct action would be taken as well as regular maintenance of the gullies and pipework.

- 80.4.4 War Memorial junction/proposals for bollards and/or planters. The Highways project team that undertook the recent works were looking into options. The drainage issue was still to be addressed.
- 80.4.5 Silver Street. The area damaged due to frost heave had now been repaired.
- 80.4.6 Traffic speeds since the installation of the 20mph zone. The results of the speed and volume monitoring in West End, Back Street and Lucas Lane were awaited.

80.5 Items from working groups.

- 80.5.1 Trees and Hedges Group. Cllr David Sims reported that the further hedge planting at the Rec had now been completed. He noted that a section of hedge and three trees had been removed in Station Road by the chicane, presumably by the developer in preparation for works.
- 80.5.2 Ashwell Yearbook 2023. Vice-chairman Norton Mahy reported that the volunteer group was due to deliver this to all households this coming weekend.
- 80.5.3 Litter picking. Vice-chairman Norton Mahy reported that this was scheduled for Saturday 15 April starting at 2pm on the Rec. Village-wide publicity was in hand.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated.

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

Signed

Date

81.1 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/>

Communications with NHC re the available planning obligation/section 106 funds available was ongoing.

81.2 Small Gains. Cllr David Sims reported that the rabbit-proof fencing had been installed and the ferreter had attended.

81.3 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported. The response to the Affinity Water consultation had been submitted emphasizing the significance of the water flows to the protection afforded by the SSSI status. The annual tree reports were still awaited from the supplier and this had been chased up again by himself and the Clerk.

81.4 Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday 22 March 8pm at the school. It was noted that this had been publicised in the Village News, notice board and website; details and the formal agenda were also included in the Yearbook.

82 PLANNING MATTERS See summary in Appendix A 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/>

82.1 New consultations received from North Herts Council.

82.1.1 Baldwins Corner, Green Lane. NHC ref. 23/00242/FPH. Two storey front and side extensions and single storey side and rear extensions, erection of side elevation conservatory and alterations to doors and windows of existing detached garage to link to main house and to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation, following demolition of existing conservatory and basement below. It was noted that there were no public comments on the NHC website. A proposal was made, and agreed, that a response 'no objections' be made to the NHC Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

82.1.2 1 Townsend Meadow. NHC ref. 22/03261/FPH. Single storey front and side extension. Re-consultation on amended plans received. It was noted that there were three public comments on the NHC website, two in support and one objection. It was noted that the amendments now made reflected the grounds on which the Parish Council had previously objected, ie encroachment on the root protection area of the adjacent tree and hedge, the built element would be much closer to the frontage and would thus have a negative impact on the amenity value of the area.

Standing orders were suspended for the applicant to speak. Because the new application addressed the Council's original objections, it was agreed that a response 'no objections' be made to the NHC Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

82.1.3 Bluegates Farm, Loves Lane. NHC ref. 23/00369/FP. Installation of agricultural silage clamp and concrete apron. It was noted that there were no public comments on the NHC website. It was noted that the application included a significant amount of detail that required appropriate knowledge to fully interpret. A proposal was made, and agreed, that a response 'no objections' be made to the NHC Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

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

82.2.1 103 High Street. NHC ref. 23/00238/TCA. Apple crown reduction by up to 2m. No objections were raised. It was noted that the NHC planning officer had already signed this off in order to meet the deadline. There were, in any case, no objections.

82.2.2 55 Silver Street. NHC ref. 23/00325/TCA. Felling 4 maples and 1 plum. It was noted that information had been received from the Head at the school, the adjacent property. During their works to install a ground source heat pump within the school grounds significant potential issues with tree roots had been identified associated with the overgrown garden in the neighbouring property that had been unoccupied for some time. The property owner had been approached and it had been agreed that removal of the trees would be the best option. A proposal was made, and agreed, that a response 'no objections' be made to the NHC Planning Officer. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

82.3 Updates on previous planning applications, developments ongoing. *See also 80.4.2 above.*

83 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

83.1 The latest budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts were noted and proposed for acceptance. This was agreed.

83.2 Review of Internal Audit procedures. It was noted that there had been no changes of significance since the previous review. A proposal was made for acceptance, seconded, and agreed.

83.3 Grass/hedge cutting contract. It was noted that the previous supplier had agreed a contract for the coming year but had now withdrawn. Several new potential suppliers had been identified and were being approached to tender for the contract. In view of the time constraints a proposal was made that a decision on a new supplier would be made following consultation with parish councillors by email. This was agreed.

The Chairman proposed that the following items be held *in camera* on the grounds that they would include matters of a sensitive nature and personal information. *Standing Order item 62.*

Meeting closed to the public.

[*In camera* minute]

83.4 Co-option updates. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that following an approach by a parishioner with a request for information on becoming a parish councillor he had spoken to the individual and the clerk had provided some general information.

83.5 Personnel update. It was noted that information had been circulated to parish councillors. A proposal was made, and seconded, that Sarah Mitchell be offered the role of Deputy Clerk with a view to her taking over the role of Clerk, currently Jane Porter, from July.

Meeting closed: 8.50pm

Forthcoming meetings:

Annual Parish meeting Wednesday 22 March 8pm at Ashwell Primary School.

Appendix A: Planning summary

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 01 March 2023				
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
Baldwins Corner, Green Lane	23/00242/FPH	Two storey front and side extensions and single storey side and rear extensions, erection of side elevation conservatory and alterations to doors and windows of existing detached garage to link to main house and to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation, following demolition of existing conservatory and basement below.	No objection. March Council meeting 82.1.1	Pending
1 Townsend Meadow	22/03261/FPH	Single storey front and side extension. Re-consultation on amended plans received (see below)	No objection. March Council meeting 82.1.2	Pending
Bluegates Farm, Loves Lane	23/00369/FP	Installation of agricultural silage clamp and concrete apron.	No objection. March Council meeting 82.1.3	Pending
9 Springhead	23/00138/FPH	Full Permission Householder: Two storey rear and single storey side extension	No objection. February Council meeting 76.2.1	Pending
86 High Street	23/00091/FPH	Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension, insertion of bay window to existing ground floor side elevation and erection of side elevation garden wall with a timber gate following demolition of single storey rear extension.	No objection. February Council meeting 76.2.2	Pending
Land Between Hunts Ridge And Ashwell House no 5, High Street (known as Hunts Close)	22/03094/FP	Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping	Objection. See January Council meeting 69.1.1 AND Planning Committee meeting (Sat 07 at 10am)	Pending
Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	<u>New consultation on amendments</u> 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.	Objection. January Council meeting 69.1.1 <i>Previous response to NHC: Objection</i> <i>See June Council 2022,</i>	Pending
Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP	<u>New consultation on further amendments</u> Full Planning Permission : Erection of two detached 4-bedroom dwellings and double garages, including alterations to existing vehicular access (as amended by plans received 12.12.2022).	On-site planning meeting (Sat 07 at 11am) <i>Previous response to NHC: Objection</i> <i>See July council 2022, 25.1.1</i>	Pending
1 Townsend Meadow	22/03261/FPH	Full Permission Householder : Single storey front and side extension.	Objection. January Council meeting 69.1.5	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

Appendix B: Monthly accounts summary

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 28th February 2023				
RECEIPTS				£
Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (February)			68.75
Stevenage Funeral care	Cemetery - 23.01			245.00
CW - 23.03	CW-23.03			150.00
Santander	Reserve Account Interest			24.69
EH Crouch Funeral Care	CW 22.28			810.00
EH Crouch Funeral Care	CW 23.02			300.00
			Total	£1,598.44
PAYMENTS				
		£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly Fee (Feb)	25.00	5.00	30.00
Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables January Inv No 2476	95.00	0.00	95.00
Gillian George	Pavilion repairs Inv 2120	95.00	0.00	95.00
TJ Fire & Security	Fire Extinguishers Office & Pavilion - Inv 66267	146.86	29.38	176.24
Horne Builders	Leak in Pavilion	100.00	0.00	100.00
David Sims	Lock for Small gains	13.32	2.66	15.98
Eon Next	Pavilion Electric 12/09/2021 to 20/01/2023	465.08	23.25	488.33
Eon Next	Pavilion Electric 21/01/23-31/01/23	20.11	1.01	21.12
Wright Accounts	Bookkeeping January 2023 _inv 1004	400.00	0.00	400.00
DJ Granger Grounds	Cemetary Soil clearance & lime Tree Inv 023226	582.00	116.40	698.40
BT	Phones & Broadband 01/02/23 to 30/04/23	152.85	30.57	183.42
Eon Next	Electric at Toilets Jan 23 - Inv K!-1880255C-0021	31.20	1.56	32.76
Ashwell Parochial Church Council	CLT Meeting 16th March	10.20	0.00	10.20
HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk Pension to LGPS	530.22	0.00	530.22
HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	514.86	0.00	514.86
CPM Playgrounds	Safety Barrier at the Rec	660.00	132.00	792.00
ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	295.20	0.00	295.20
Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	156.40	0.00	156.40
Clerk	Clerk salary	1,527.69	0.00	1527.69
Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables February Inv No 2485	190.00	0.00	190.00
M & J Oakley Ltd	Rabbit Fencing at Small Gains INV-1244	1,875.00	375.00	2250.00
Ace Pest Control	Small Gains rabbit ferreting	680.00	136.00	816.00
		8,565.99	852.83	
			Total	£9,418.82
MONEY AT BANK				
	Current Account 28/02/2023	9,485.50		
	Reserve Account 28/02/2023	52,878.29		
	Total cash	£62,363.79		

Signed

Date