

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd October 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Graham Lee (Chair) Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Joan Yates, Chris Button (arrived later due to work commitments), Vinny Hall, Martin Hoffman (both joined via Zoom link).

Also in attendance: Clerk Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk Nicky Forrester, several members of the public, District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. The meeting was recorded on Zoom.

Please see website for audio recording and for appendices issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [2024 Meeting Minutes and Agendas](#)

- 49 **Apologies for absence** To receive and accept apologies for absence.
From Cllr David Sims (holiday).

Interests (a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda, (b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests, and (c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate. Where any declaration of interest involved the Chair, the meeting to agree an alternative individual to take the Chair for that item(s). Cllr Lee has an ongoing Dispensation from the April meeting to report on Zero Carbon Ashwell.

- 50 **Minutes** - to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 4th September 2024. It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings and resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Clerk/Chair**

- 51 **Parish Issues and Public Participation** [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)

Standing Orders were suspended.

- 51.1 To hear any new matters raised (members of the public and councillors can raise any Parish related matters).

- 51.1.1 To note any update on Ashwell Academical Youth Football Club (ACCIES) in an effort to keep more playing matches and training in the Village. [Appendix A & Appendix B](#)

Currently no further update.

- 51.1.2 To note any updates to information received from NHC regarding North Herts Prosperity Fund. [Appendix C](#)

The Parish Council applied but were unsuccessful in their bid. NHC advised that the PC were to be unlikely to be successful due to the number of applicants.

- 51.1.3 To note updates on request from [EatFeast](#).

The Clerk has contacted the 3 Public Houses and received a response from one to say they are against the request as it could detract from business. Clerk to contact the sports clubs using the rec for their opinion. **Action: Clerk**

51.1.4 To note update from NHC on the installation of the [new electronics communication 9m pole near West End Ashwell.](#)

A standard pole has now been installed.

51.1.5 To note correspondence from [The Freemasons.](#)

The Parish Council received correspondence from the Freemasons explaining their history of involvement with the village over many years and requested an article in the next Yearbook inviting applications for funds that may be available to Groups/Organisations within the village from the Freemasons. Cllr Mahy said we should not interfere with their good intentions and will confirm the views of the Yearbook Editorial Team at the next meeting. **Action: Cllr Mahy**

51.1.6 To note correspondence from a parishioner re [Banks' cash machine provision obligation.](#)

Cllr Lee to approach the local Labour MP to establish the process regarding the amended law which states that cash facilities should be available to those with a need in rural communities. Currently cash can be obtained from the Post Office during its opening hours. Cllr Yates commented that some banks offer special services to over 65 year olds or those who cannot access a bank. Cllr Yates to correspond with Clerk to send out as a Newsletter. **Action: Cllr Lee/ Cllr Yates/Clerk**

51.2 To receive reports from representatives from outside bodies, local authorities and agencies.

51.2.1 To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis, to include drainage issues, schedules and what action can be taken and Herts Sports Project as a potential fund raising source.

To note response from Steve Jarvis reference [Lynx bus service](#) and [Guide](#).

Cllr Jarvis commented that drainage has been challenged in the surrounding areas due to high rainfall. Kingsland Way gullies are scheduled to be cleaned 6 monthly, with the next clean between October–December. Report of parked cars prevented the full clean earlier in the year.

Patching of the road in Aswell Street between Kingsland Way and Claybush road has taken place. The kerbing work required at the War Memorial in Lucas Lane hopefully to be carried out after Remembrance Day.

Cllr Lee thanked Steve Jarvis for the HertsLynx bus Service information, details of which are under the 'News' Section of the website.

Cllr Jarvis to report on Herts Sports Project at the next meeting. **Action: Cllr Jarvis**

51.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson, to include drainage issues, schedules and what action can be taken and to receive update regarding development off Station Road being built too close to the hedge.

Cllr Tyson reported that debris from the trees washing downwards along the roads are causing drains to be blocked. Cllr Tyson will continue to contact the Street Cleansing Officer for further information of schedule although with the leaf drop imminent, it may be less useful than if they were to delay the clean.

Cllr Tyson will try to gain a sense of schedules from NHC when the new contract comes into play and could affect the routine. Cllr Tyson commented that the known trouble spots at Back Street, Hodwell, bottom of Wilsons Lane and West End were functioning reasonably well, however Partridge Hill has a channel which consistently opens up despite work to prevent this.

51.2.3 Cllr Jarvis stated that maintenance of Partridge Hill and The Ruddy is reportable to Rights of Way not Highways and he will approach the ROW Officer to see what interventions may be possible. **Action: Cllr Jarvis**

51.2.4 It was noted that the increase in the size of the village has not helped the original drainage system and also noted that those parishioners who kept drains clear in their vicinity by periodically moving the debris did not experience quite the same problems as those who did not.

51.2.5 A parishioner raised the subject of Declaration of Interest and that there may be a risk if the CLT has an interest in the affordable housing element. Cllr Lee stated that in August when the matter was raised a declaration of interest was made because at that stage it was hoped there may be an opportunity for the village to secure affordable housing through a Housing Association serving Ashwell. However in subsequent conversations with NHC it was stated this is not possible therefore reference to the CLT will not be part of the appeal.

51.2.6 A parishioner raised the subject of the sum of £160,000 being available for projects for the village. Cllr Lee advised that the details are opaque for historical reasons. There have been different interpretations over time from different NHC Officers managing S106. The current officer is looking into the matter. The Parish Council have requested clarification for some considerable time and still awaiting an answer.

51.2.7 Cllr Mahy reported that use of a drone to establish the boundary hedging at Station Road has been used and photos taken superimposed on the plans which shows the houses are not encroaching onto the boundary hedge. Cllr Tyson said he could not see any encroachment versus the plans, although concern was raised regarding the root ball of the trees which hopefully had been catered for.

Standing Orders to be reinstated.

52 **Reports from Working Groups.** To receive oral updates from relevant leaders/members and agree any actions that require Parish Council input/approval.

52.1 **Planning Advisory Working Group** - To note, any further information regarding S106 and awaiting the outcome from CDA Herts of the **Affordable Housing Survey**.

No further update.

52.2 **Hunts Close planning application/section 106 claim** - To receive update from Cllr Mahy and Cllr Tyson.

Cllr Mahy has submitted a S106 Claim and has consulted with Cllr Tyson in support of this. Cllr Mahy to draft a letter to put to the Inspector if appropriate. **Action: Cllr Mahy**

52.3 Access to Ashwell station includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. (Cllr Lee).

Approximately 2 weeks ago, Cllr Lee contacted a South Cambs Councillor and is awaiting a reply. Cllr Tyson has received no update.

52.4 Trees and Hedges (Cllr Sims).

No further updates - see items under 54.4.

52.5 Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) group. (Cllrs Lee & Duffy).

Three companies have agreed to tender for the feasibility study. Due date to submit Phase 1 of the grant application is 11th October. Community Energy Fund has updated their form and the ZCA working group are on track to complete by the deadline date. Grant funding available is £40,000.

53 Planning matters: to include new and existing applications. To see full details of applications on the [NHC website](#) enter the reference number into the planning search box.

53.1 New consultations received from NHC. To note any correspondence and agree responses.

53.2 Current Applications awaiting NHC Decision –

53.2.1 To note any updates to 24/01444/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing).

No update of the Planning meeting date, awaiting information from NHC, indicator is end of year or early next.

53.2.2 To note any updates to Kirby Manor Farm Northfield Road: 24/01570/PNQ : Notification of application for prior approval for conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide 8 residential unit.

Cllr Tyson advised that the application was withdrawn two weeks ago. It is possible that a revised application will be applied for at a later date. It was noted the Parish Council had received no correspondence as such.

53.3 Appeal Consultation 22/03094/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping – To agree a response to the appeal consultation.

The closing date for the Parish Council to submit their objection against the appeal is 16th October 2024. Cllr Tyson noted that the Appeal showed the incorrect position of the red line boundary and that the applicant when submitting the appeal agreed it could be moved, however there is no document relating to this on the planning portal.

It was noted that the Parish Council will submit a combined response covering both applications 22/03094/FP and 24/01444/FP to reflect the following views:

- The site is not allocated in the local plan to meet the 5 year housing supply need.
- Concern over the correct red line boundary to neighbouring property/land owner.

- Applications fail to meet specific requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Development would have a significant adverse effect on the conservation area identified by the Conservation Manager and breaches NP policies.
- Development adversely impacts on pedestrian safety with increased impact at the Ruddy and Kingsland Way junction.

Should the Inspector or NHC Planning Officer approve the application the following will be requested:

- Change in status of The Ruddy from 'Byway Open to All Traffic' (BOAT) to a restricted byway.
- Insertion of bollards immediately to the East of the entrance making the site entrance as close to the West as possible.
- To obtain a legal binding agreement of public space and granted in perpetuity to the Parish Council.
- To ensure protection to trees and hedges that sit near boundaries.
- To reflect concerns of neighbours and Herts Highways over boundary materials and design of pedestrian access from Lucas Lane.
- Restrict lighting provision on the site & rural approaches.
- To agree with Highways, restriction to The Ruddy and Ashwell Street to Kingsland Way junction to reduce impact.
- Obtain agreement for S106 contribution from the developer.

To note the [Planning Summary](#) as of 26th September 2024.

53.4 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC. To agree responses to any received.

53.4.1 **24/02085/TCA : 3 Green Lane** : T1: Holly - Crown Reduce by up to 1.5m, crown shape and cut back from road. T2: Crab Apple - Crown Reduce by up to 1m to suitable growth points. T3: Rowan - Crown Reduce by up to 1m to suitable growth points

Cllr Sims has advised the application is for pruning rather than removal. The Council accept this recommendation to not object.

53.4.2 **24/02080/TCA : Ashwell Cemetery** : 667: Holm Oak – 4m crown reduction. 681: Holm Oak – 3m crown reduction.

Cllr Sims has advised the application is for pruning rather than removal. The Council accept this recommendation to not object.

53.4.3 **24/02059/TCA : Wolverley House** : Trees (Conservation Area) : Beech – Raise Canopy by up to 2.4 meters : Cherry – Remove tree stake: Lime - Raise Canopy by up to 2.4 meters : Willow- re-pollard leaving mistletoe in situ : Ash - Raise Canopy by up to 2.4 meters 8. Cedar – Top reduction around the sides away from building : Lime – Crown thin by up to 30% : Tulip - Raise Canopy by up to 2.4 meters : Cherry – remove tree stake Rear boundary wall near tree 6 and 7: remove ivy from top to mid point (possibly collar and return) .

Cllr Sims has advised the application is for pruning rather than removal. The Council accept this recommendation to not object.

- 53.4.4 **24/02144/TCA** : The Old Rectory : Trees (Conservation Area) : Beech T1: Horse Chestnut - Crown reduce by 2m. 3m reduction on Southern side. T2: Sycamore - Crown lift by 2m and reduce lower canopy by 2m. T3: Lime - Repollard and reshape canopy structure. No growth to be left on and reshape unbalanced knuckles. T4: Group Plum - Reduce in height by 2m to suitable growth points

Cllr Sims has advised the application is for pruning rather than removal. The Council accept this recommendation to not object.

- 53.5 To note the [Tree Planning Summary](#) as of 26th September 2024.

- 53.6 **Provisional TPO** re Claybush Hill Meadow [Appendix D](#) To note any updates.

No further update.

54 Reports from Committees

- 54.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral reports and agree any actions.

No further reports.

To discuss staff issue with the Parish Council.

Exclusion of Press and Public. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely: staff issue.

The Parish Council addressed an issue relating to staff correspondence.

55 Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities. To receive oral reports and agree any actions needed.

- 55.1 **The Springs** Report from Cllr Hoffman.

To note the fallen tree to be shortly removed from the Springs

- 55.2 **St Mary's Churchyard** Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman.

To note a parishioner approached the Council regarding an overhanging branch at St Mary's Church. St Mary's PCC do not wish to take action and are in correspondence with the parishioner.

- 55.3 **Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets.** Report from Cllr Graham Lee. To include the further consultation on the Pavilion and public toilets. To consider any next steps (including whether to set up a committee or a working party). See [2024 Pavilion Consultation working documents](#) for discussion.

To receive update on [Public Consultation Questionnaire](#)

To note the public consultation which closes on 14th October. The Parish Council have received over 70 responses so far and have sent a reminder to all parishioners. The results will be collated as from 15th October 2024. The Pavilion will be open for visits in order that Parishioners

can view the premises. Cllr Mahy is in liaison with the ACCIES, and it was noted that the safeguarding of children must be considered.

To receive update on posters to be displayed at The Recreation ground.

No further updates

To receive update from Cllr Mahy regarding fees & charges for use of the Rec & Pavilion facilities.

No further update.

55.4 Small Gains (Accies pitch and allotments). Report from Cllr David Sims.

No further update.

55.5 War Memorial. To note any updates.

55.5.1 Cleaning and Minor Repairs to War Memorial.

To note update of cleaning and minor repairs booked, prior to Remembrance Sunday.

55.5.2 War Memorial Revaluation Insurance.

We are committed to our current insurer for the next 2 years. It will cost almost £400 to insure the war memorial to the value of £100,000. It was agreed at the last meeting to insure at this value, and the amount to be paid to the Insurance Company.

55.6 Cemetery – To note a report from Cllr Mahy. To note any comments raised following the newsletter announcing a volunteer group tidying unattended graves mid/end September.

To receive update from Cllr Mahy & Cllr Button regarding the Explorers Group.

The contractors work has been completed at the cemetery. Cllr Mahy met with the Deputy Clerk and identified what work needed to be carried out to unattended graves. Cllr Mahy to arrange working parties and a suitable date within the next 2-3 weeks. Cllr Button & Mahy have been in contact with the Explorers group and there are several volunteers who will join the working party.

Street furniture.

55.6.1 Litter bin review. Report from Cllr Mahy. To include the ongoing consultation and communications with NHC.

No further update.

56 Finance and Governance

56.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to 31st August 2024 to be circulated to parish councillors after the end of the month. Proposal that the summary of receipts and payments be issued with the draft minutes and the two nominated parish councillors sign off the accounts in accordance with internal control procedures.

To note any variances of actual expenditure compared to budget.

The budget tracking document for August is available to view on the website.

56.2 Insurance Renewal Policy

To note information from insurance broker in regard to renewal on 1st October 2024 and our request for increasing the cover in liability.

See above item 55.5.2.

- 56.3 **Annual Audit** for the 2023-24 financial year. To note the Interim review received from the External Auditor, no issues have been raised but a final report is pending their review of correspondence from a Parishioner.

It was noted that the latest documents received from the External Auditor are on the website.

- 56.4 **Parish Council Grant for PCC** – to note the request from St Mary’s for a grant to support the hosting of the mobile Post Office in the Parish Church Room.

It was noted that the matter is being dealt with by a member of St Mary’s PCC who will contact the Chairman.

- 56.5 **To approve change of bank signatories to reflect new Clerk.**

It was resolved to change the bank signatories to replace with the new Clerk.

- 56.6 **Safeguarding Policy** – to adopt an APC [Safeguarding Policy](#).

It was resolved to adopt the Safeguarding Policy.

- 56.7 **To note update to NHC Community Governance Review.**

It was noted the Clerk has submitted an application to reduce the number of Ashwell Parish Councillors from 12 to 9. No further updates.

- 56.8 **To note [Draft Terms of Reference](#) for working groups.**

It was resolved to adopt the Terms of Reference for workings groups. These have been circulated to Councillors and published on the website. (It was noted that just prior to the meeting a zip file containing the documents would not open - Clerk to repost Terms of Reference). **Action: Clerk**

- 56.9 **To receive any other oral reports.**

56.9.1 To note a request from the URC for a Parish Council representative to lay a wreath at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday 10th October. Clerk to confirm that a volunteer will do so and establish where to obtain the wreath and further details. **Action: Clerk**

56.9.2 To note a request to assist with parking notices for loading/unloading vehicles at the village shop. Whilst it is not within the Parish Councils gift to grant this, the Parish Council are keen to support. Cllr Jarvis to establish length of time suitable for this task.

Action: Cllr Jarvis

56.9.3 To note request from the Makers Market Chairman to display a banner at the Springs to advertise the village sale in St Mary’s Church before Christmas. Whilst the Parish Council are happy to support this, the proviso would be that the banner is removed shortly after the event.

Action: Clerk

56.9.4 To note the request from the Village Hall group to obtain a grant from the Parish Council to assist with the repair of a chalk wall. This will be a discussion point for the November Agenda.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 6th November 2024, 7pm.

Date of Finance Committee Meeting: Monday 21st October, 7pm.

DRAFT

Signed

Date