

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 05 June 2024, at 7.00pm,
in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Norton Mahy (Vice chair, acting as Chair for this meeting), Chris Button, Ian Duffy, Martin Hoffman and David Sims.

Also in attendance: Acting Clerk Jane Porter, Deputy Clerk Nicky Forrester, Trainee Clerk Sally Roberts. Seven members of the public were present and 2 joined on Zoom. District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis were also present.

The meeting was recorded on Zoom by the Parish Council and also by a parishioner. Please see website for the audio recording and for appendices issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [2024 Meeting Minutes and Agendas](#)

15 Apologies for absence Cllrs Graham Lee (holiday), Vinny Hall (Long term dispensation).

Minutes [Draft Minutes May 2024](#) It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings. It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Norton

16 Parish Issues and Public Participation [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)

Standing Orders were suspended.

16.1 To note the following ongoing consultations/surveys, responses to date and agree any actions.

16.1.1 *Consultation on the Outreach Post Office service hosted by St Mary's Church in the Parish Room to gain local residents' views on the impact of the service reduction to two sessions per week.* [Survey: Ashwell Outreach Post Office](#)

There had been little feedback on the changed opening times (twice per week), it was noted that the equipment is unreliable and regularly breaks down, disrupting the service. Nikki da Costa is our contact. No further comments.

16.1.2 Consultation on improvements at the playground. [Playground improvement consultation](#)

A survey had been carried out some time ago, concluding a preference for a skate-park, however, given the money available this is not feasible. It was suggested that a Working Group of interested parishioners could be set up to look at issues and consider resources, this is less formal than a Sub-Committee.

Councillors were invited to consider which way forward might be the better option and that it will be an Agenda item for the July PC meeting.

Action: Councillors

There followed a discussion on how the Playground Consultation was advertised and it was suggested that it be re-advertised on the HUB with an instruction to write to the Clerk of the PC rather than comment via social media. **Action: Clerk**

- 16.1.3 Consultation on the pavilion and public toilets upgrade, 'Renovation or replacement?' See information to date: [Pavilion and Public Toilets at the Rec](#)

A parishioner raised queries over disparity of costs from documents which are available to view on the website (see above link), in regard to renovation/repair/replacement. The parishioner enquired to the cost of a game of football per hour, stating that users of the facilities should pay their fair share of it. It was explained that the lower cost document on the website was essential repairs including roofing/plumbing, rather than full reconstruction of the existing structure, which was the cost mentioned at the Parish Meeting. It was also noted that the public toilets building is inadequate and that the Chair had agreed to write a document further explaining the options and approximate costs.

- 16.2 To note any police matters. To include, the changes to the police online Neighbourhood Watch scheme; OWL now [Herts Connected](#)

No further comments

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

- 16.3.1 [Cereals24 Event](#) in Newnham.

See above in Public Participation.

- 16.3.2 Parishioner concerns re trees at the Ruddery.

See above in Public Participation.

- 16.3.3 Under agenda item 17.1 Affordable Housing, a parishioner suggested that to encourage residents to complete the survey there should be a register of interest for self builds. The deadline date for the survey had been extended by one month to 31st May 2024 to accommodate, and this had been publicised.

- 16.3.4 Further comments were made by the parishioner regarding availability of papers with the Agenda. It was stated that as the Proper Officer this is the Clerks decision. The parishioner went on to state that the 3 minute rule per person to speak within a 15 minute public participation forum does not credit the PC if serious points are being made. It was stated that the total 15 minutes public participation slot can be extended at the Chair's discretion.

- 16.3.5 Several parishioners addressed the road safety issues of Claybush Road and Ashwell Street. The speed limit is 30mph but vehicles are travelling well in excess, also taking a blind bend at speed. There is a safety issue with a curb that protrudes and cannot easily be seen, this has already caused issues with damaged tyres and presents a safety hazard. Exacerbating the problem is the overgrowing vegetation which impedes visually, it was agreed that the Parish Council would look into this.

Aggravating all of this, residents are currently enduring the Cereals24 Event with the movement of huge machines onto site and potentially attracting up to 12,000 visitors.

Parishioners suggested remedies such as: Could the 30mph sign be moved 100m further along the road to give drivers time to adjust their speed? A chicane was also suggested as a potential solution allowing residents from the estate to have time to transit the junction whilst generally slowing down the traffic. Steve Jarvis stated that the Police would not be in favour of moving the 30mph sign as it goes against their general procedure.

A parishioner added that the planned housing of circa 2500 dwellings in Bygrave would likely create a rat-run through Ashwell.

Other issues discussed were the size of lorries mounting private drives because the road is not wide enough, traffic stuck on the Ruddery and on Ashwell Street causing safety issues.

Steve Jarvis was invited to give his thoughts on what can be done and how actions can be pursued. He responded that potentially changing the layout of the junction might be a solution, however, Highways would need to be in agreement, costs would have to be found, and would this change be acceptable to the village? Should we reach that stage, it could be put to the village via a PC consultation for example? A Councillor commented that back up by the Police with mobile speeding cameras would be useful.

Steve Jarvis will raise the subject of the protruding curb with Highways and will also arrange for a traffic speed measuring device which monitors traffic 24hrs per day for one week on Claybush Hill. It was requested that this should not be carried out during the school Summer Holidays as there is a reduction in traffic generally.

The Parish Council to approach the landowner on the subject of the overgrowing and overhanging vegetation.

16.3.6 Further items discussed during the public forum: A better communication system with the village, despite the parish council making three leaflet drops, many parishioners have said they had not seen them. Parishioners felt the HUB would be a good communication tool. However the Parish Council would require parishioners to communicate directly with the Clerk not via a comment on the HUB.

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

16.4.1 Report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

See above in Public Participation.

16.4.2 Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

CLLr Tyson had received correspondence of antisocial parking in the village potentially obstructing the emergency services. It was suggested that the contact details of our PCSO were published on the HUB and website for parishioners to make direct contact.

Further correspondence was grass that had been cut and was not up to standard.

Cereals24 comments from parishioners, were lack of sufficient notice given and communication generally and that the disruption will be considerable. The suggested route is to enter via Newnham and exit out of Bygrave.

Cllr Mahy addressed with Cllr Tyson the training process for preparation of bids for S106 with Shaun Greaves, Head of Planning NHC, Cllr Tyson said this had been delayed because of the election but he will raise it with him afterwards.

Standing Orders to be reinstated.

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

17.1 Planning Advisory (includes matters re affordable housing and section 106) (Cllrs Chris Button and Norton Mahy). To note the current Affordable Housing Survey - deadline 31 May 2024. [Affordable Housing Survey](#)

A Representative of CDA Herts had collected the surveys, it was a slightly disappointing response.

17.2 Access to Ashwell station (includes the cycle/footway route and car parking). (Cllr Lee)
Cllr Lee was absent from the meeting and will report at the July meeting.

17.3 Trees and Hedges (Cllr David Sims).

It was reported that TCAs received were for tidying-up/pruning and cutting back.

The new fencing looks very good at the Recreation Ground. There was a damaged post would be addressed.

17.4 Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) group. (Cllrs Graham Lee & Ian Duffy).

Pleased with progress of the group and Cllr Lee will update at the July meeting.

17.5 Village Sports Day. To note this was held on Sunday 19th May 2024 at the Recreation Ground.

The village sports day was a huge success and greatly enjoyed by many residents. The Parish Council extended their formal thanks and asked the Clerk to respond.

Action: Clerk

18 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.* [NHC Planning website](#)

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

18.1.1 19 Lucas Lane. NHC ref. 24/00816/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Two storey side single storey front and single storey rear extension and alterations to existing fenestration following demolition of existing detached side garage and garden store. Alterations to existing vehicular access following partial demolition of existing boundary wall.

It was felt there was no significant impact to the village and the proposed design of changes did not feel at odds with the original building. Demolition of garage and incorporation of hard standing parking spaces to meet parking requirements had been addressed.

It was proposed that this response be finalised after the meeting with input from Cllr Button and Cllr Mahy. This Matter was resolved by all councillors.

Action: Clerk

- 18.1.2 **17 Lucas Lane. NHC ref. 24/00815/FPH.** Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension, replace existing front garage door with an entrance door and windows to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation and alternations to existing fenestration. Widen existing vehicular access following partial demolition of existing boundary wall.

As above for 19 Lucas Lane.

Action: Clerk

- 18.1.3 **1 Gardiners Lane. NHC ref. 24/00452/LBC.** Listed Building Consent : To replace the windows at the rear of the building (2 in kitchen, ground floor. 1 in bathroom, 1st floor above arch) with 4:6:4 slimlite glazing with wooden frames made to match existing windows.

It was resolved that The Parish Council be guided by the Conservation Officer to comment on suitability of replacement windows.

Action: Clerk

- 18.1.4 **28 Hodwell. NHC ref. 24/01072/FPH.** Full Permission Householder: Partially replace existing picket boundary fence and associated gates and erect side fence and gate.

There was a slight difference in height to the picket fence. However it was resolved that the Parish Council has no objections.

Action: Clerk

- 18.2 **Slip End Farm, Royston Road, Slip End. NHC ref. 24/00754/FP.** Full Planning Permission : *Erection of two 3-bed, three 4-bed and two 5-bed dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, parking, garaging and private gardens following the demolition of existing agricultural barns.* To note further correspondence, (see May Council Minutes 11.1.2)

Further correspondence received from the Planning Officer. The item will go to Planning Committee. Cllr Button enquired of Cllr Tyson if our comments will be heard at Committee and Cllr Tyson advised this was so. Clerk to request a speaking slot at the Committee Meeting.

Action - Clerk

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

- 18.3.1 **105 High Street.** NHC ref. 24/01111/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Mature Yew - Crown Trim by 0.5m & crown lift to 2.5m.

Routine work - see Cllr Sims comments above.

- 18.3.2 **Ventnor House, 36 High Street.** NHC ref. 24/01110/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Mature Bay - Crown Reduction of 2.5m. T2 Ornamental Cherry - Crown Reduce by 1m to suitable growth points.

Routine work - see Cllr Sims comments above.

- 18.3.3 **65 Back Street.** NHC ref. 24/01109/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Ornamental Cherry - 1m crown reduction. T2 Pear - Crown lift up to 2.5m. T3 Gingko - Crown lift to 2.5m & selectivity prune crossing branches. T4 Amelanchier - Reduce crown by 1m

Routine work - see Cllr Sims comments above.

18.4 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC; to note the responses already made to the NHC Planning Officer in order to meet their deadlines.

18.4.1 **32 Ashwell Street. NHC ref: 24/01021/TC.** Trees (Conservation Area) : T1 Birch - Reduce height by 1.5 to 2m shape and balance cutting to viable growth. T2 Birch -Fell to ground level and eco plug. T3 Birch x3 Stems - Reduce height by 2m, bring in the stem leaning over the driveway.

Routine work - see Cllr Sims comments above.

18.5 To note from NHC. "A provisional Tree Preservation Order was placed on a group of trees comprising a mix of Ash, Hawthorn, Maple, Holly, Yew, Wild Cherry, Silver Birch, Lime, Norway Maple, Sycamore, Blackthorn, Horse Chestnut and Walnut trees at Land and adjoining Claybush Hill Meadow, Ashwell, SG7 5RA, on 23 May 2024." (See March Council Minutes 118.3)

Provisional Tree Preservation order received from the Council in response to local concerns.

To note the Planning Summary as of 28 May 2024. [Planning Summary Spreadsheet](#).

19 Reports from Committees

19.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral report and agree any actions.

None

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

20.1 The Springs. Report from Cllr Martin Hoffman.

Inspection by Natural England had been delayed and will be rescheduled.

20.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman.

Imminent inspection planned.

20.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. Report from Cllr Graham Lee. To include the previously published consultations on the playground and the pavilion and further consultation and actions re the pavilion and public toilets.

Cllr Lee to provide report upon his return, see Public Forum comments above.

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

Cllr Mahy thanked Cllr Tyson for the bench which has been sited at Small Gains. Also two people are now on the waiting list for an allotment.

20.5 War Memorial. To note any updates re the Highways issues, quotes from suppliers re cleaning, minor works to the steps and insurance valuation update.

Cleaning and minor work of the war memorial is proving expensive and we are awaiting a second quote. An updated insurance valuation is due, last carried out in 2014. The current insurance policy is index linked. Deputy Clerk to discuss with Cllr Mahy.

Action: Deputy Clerk

20.6 Cemetery. To note any updates.

Correspondence had been received from the public over the past few days enquiring when the grass will be cut. The Deputy Clerk advised the Council that the Grounds Maintenance Company are contracted to carry out 12 cuts per year, their work is behind schedule due to weather and enhanced growing conditions of vegetation. Work however is planned and underway.

There was also a gravestone damaged during one of the strimming sessions. The Deputy Clerk had corresponded with the Grounds Maintenance Company who had accepted responsibility and agreed to cover cost of repair.

20.7 Street furniture.

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

Nothing to report

20.7.2 Seats. To note any updates.

The bench seat kindly donated by the WI is now installed at Angells Meadow. The WI have thanked the Deputy Clerk and Parish Council for their work.

21 Finance and Governance

21.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to 31st May 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.

Standard practice is that the internal control procedures up to the last financial year is signed by two Parish Councillors. In future, The Accounts Clerk will submit electronically. Information therefore will be presented in a slightly different format. It is a positive step forward for Ashwell.

Proposed by Cllr Hoffman and seconded by Cllr Sims. The Matter was resolved.

21.2 Annual Audit for the 2023-24 financial year. To note the following:

- (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.

These has been sent to the Internal Auditor and we are waiting to hear back that all is satisfactory. Dates of Exercise of Public Rights will be placed on the noticeboard and published to the website. The Matter was resolved.

21.2.1 Proposal to approve Section 1/Annual Governance Statement.

Cllr Hoffman proposed approval with the proviso that should there be any significant issues raised by the by Internal auditor that these would be address prior to submission to the external auditor.

Matter Resolved.

21.2.2 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).

Cllr Hoffman proposed approval with the proviso that should there be any significant issues raised by the by Internal auditor that these would be address prior to submission to the external auditor. Matter Resolved.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3rd July 2024, 7pm.

Issued by Sally Roberts, Trainee Clerk to Ashwell Parish Council, 11 June 2024

Signed

Date