

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 03 April 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Chris Button (Chair for items 126.5 and 130.3), Graham Lee (Chair except for items 126.5 and 130.3), Norton Mahy (Vice chair) and David Sims.

Also in attendance: The Acting Clerk Jane Porter. District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Two members of the public were present and one joined on Zoom. Cllr Ian Duffy joined on Zoom.

The meeting was recorded on Zoom by the Parish Council and also by a parishioner.

Please see the website for the audio recording and for the appendices issued with the agenda and referred to in the minutes.

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/full-council/2024-meetings-minute/>

122 Apologies for absence *To receive and accept apologies for absence.* Apologies were received from Cllrs Ian Duffy (unwell), Vinny Hall (unwell), Martin Hoffman (unwell).

123 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 involves the chair, the meeting to agree an alternative individual to take the chair for that item(s).*

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/what_the_parish_council_does_from_may_2023/haptc_guidance-on-declarations-of-interest_and_dispensations.pdf

Cllr Graham Lee declared an 'other' interest in items 126.5 and 130.3.1 re his membership of the Zero Carbon Ashwell group. Re item 126.5 (Working Groups) Cllr Graham Lee requested a dispensation to address the meeting. It was agreed that this be granted and the form was signed by the Clerk.

Cllr Graham Lee declared an 'other' interest in item 130.3.2 re his role as a Director of Ashwell CLT Ltd. Re item 130.3.2 (request for funding) Cllr Graham Lee requested a dispensation to participate in the meeting and vote on the grounds that the meeting would otherwise not be quorate (*three councillors required to be present and voting*). It was agreed that this be granted and the form was signed by the Clerk.

Cllr Norton Mahy declared an 'other' interest in item 130.3.2 re his role as a Director of Ashwell CLT Ltd.

- 124 **Minutes** Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 06 March 2024 as an accurate record of proceedings.

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/agendas_and_minutes/minutes/2024/draft_minutes_march_council_2024.pdf

Resolved as approved and to be signed.

Action: Clerk/Chair

125 Parish Issues and Public Participation

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/what_the_parish_council_does_from_may_2023/apc_public_participation_protocol_2023.pdf

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

- 125.1 To note the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) held on Wednesday 20 March, and any updates. See draft minutes on the website

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/agendas_and_minutes/annual_parish_meetings/draft_minutes_annual_parish_meeting_20mar2024.pdf

The following items from the APM were noted:

125.1.1 Baldock Extension (see APM minute 6.1 and also District Councillor Tom Tyson's report 125.5.2 below).

125.1.2 Police matters (see APM minute 6.2 and also item 125.3 below).

125.1.3 Soft plastics recycling/possible inclusion of Ashwell in the extension of the trial (see APM minute 6.3 and also District Councillor Tom Tyson's report 125.5.2 below).

125.1.4 Zero Carbon Ashwell group (see APM minute 6.5 and items 126.5 and 130.3.1 below).

125.1.5 Ashwell Community Land Trust Ltd (see APM minute 6.6 and item 130.3.2 below).

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

125.1.6 Access to Ashwell Station/cycle and pedestrian link and car parking, and s.106 (see APM minute 7.1 also item Planning Advisory working group 126.2 below).

125.1.7 Pavilion upgrade, 'Renovation or replacement?' (see APM minute 7.2 and also items 125.2.3 and 129.3 below).

125.1.8 Playground improvements (see APM minute 7.3 and also items 125.2.3 and 129.4 below).

125.1.9 War memorial/dropped kerb issue and bollards (see APM minute 7.7.1 and report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis 125.5.1 below and also item 129.5 below).

- 125.2 To note the following ongoing consultations/surveys, responses to date and agree any actions. These were noted.

125.2.1 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. <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/survey-re-ashwell-ou/>.

It was agreed that publicity should continue and an update be requested from the parishioner who had contributed on this including whether a deadline for responses to the Post Office Ltd had been set.

Action: Clerk

Signed

Date

125.2.2 Consultation on the litter bins, 'Right Bin, Right Place' (see item 129.7 below).
<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/consultation-on-our/>

125.2.3 Consultation on the pavilion upgrade, 'Renovation or replacement?' (see also item 129.3 below). <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/the-pavilion--renova/>

The Chair reported that following the APM he had commenced drafting a detailed consultation document that covered all the items involved; various options had already been looked into and input received from user groups. Some views had already been expressed in relation to the expansion of the facilities available; he emphasized that any possible impact on existing village facilities, such as the Village Hall, the URC Hall, the Parish Room and businesses such as Rhubarb & Mustard, would be taken into account. He stressed the more engagement with the whole community 'the better'. It was agreed that a draft consultation document would be circulated to parish councillors and interested parties and a working group established.

125.2.4 Consultation on improvements at the playground (see also item 129.3 below).
<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/playground-improveme/>

125.2.5 Affordable Housing Survey - deadline 30 April 2024.
<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/affordable-housing-s/> It was agreed that further publicity be undertaken to emphasize the deadline.

125.3 *Police matters.* The following were noted, (i) The police community engagement event held on Carters Pond on Saturday 23 March; (ii) The poster project with the school to support '20's Plenty'; the latest version was currently being finalised; (iii) The changes to the police online Neighbourhood Watch scheme (OWL to become Herts Connected); it was agreed that this continue to be publicised. <https://hertsconnected.co.uk/>

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

125.4.1 A parishioner commented on/questioned the following, (i) At what point would the Ashwell CLT become a self-reliant organisation; it was responded that other parish councils had done this at varying times often dependant on projects being progressed; (ii) Would the Clerk's role in the CLT be minuted at Parish Council meetings; it was agreed that this could be done; (iii) Questions re the pavilion (see 125.2.3 above); (iv) Why had the Housing Survey not included self-build; it was noted that this formed part of the district Local Plan and agreed that this would be mentioned in the further publicity and a link to the information on the NHC website provided. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/self-build-and-custom-build-register>

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

125.5.1 Report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis. (i) The missing street light had now been installed on the column but it had not yet been painted; (ii) The proposal for bollards at the War Memorial junction, and the inclusion of reflectors, was being considered by Highways as was the drainage issue. The option of wooden rather than concrete bollards was discussed, particularly in the context of reflectors; (iii) Complaints had been received re the HertsLynx on demand bus service and feedback requested; (iv) Highways had instigated a separate programme requiring road closures for maintenance works in some of the drainage gullies on safety grounds. Parish councillors agreed that a village-wide survey of the gullies be undertaken to ensure maintenance was adequate; (v) Cllr David Sims requested that the Speed Indication

Device (SID) in Station Road be turned around to face traffic entering the village; this was agreed; (vi) In response to a request from parishioner Jill Powell, representative of the British Legion, he agreed that the lighting at the War Memorial junction would be looked into. In the interim the Parish Council would again report the vegetation obscuring the street light on the Highways system. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

125.5.2 Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson. (i) He had received reports from users that praised the Herts Lynx bus service; (ii) A decision by NHC on the Bygrave solar farm would be taken after the local elections; (iii) There was no further information on the enforcement of the planning condition for a new section of footway adjacent to Townsend Meadow. A parishioner expressed his concern at the non-adherence to planning conditions and the lack of enforcement by NHC. County Cllr Steve Jarvis reported that the Highways agreement had not been completed. Parish councillors agreed that a further request for enforcement be made to NHC; (iv) The extension of the soft plastic collection trial to include Bygrave and the part of Ashwell covered by the same team was to be confirmed; (v) Further consultation on the Baldock expansion by the master developer Urban & Civic would take place after the local elections; (vi) He had spoken to the case officer for the 17 High Street planning application re the implications for the conservation area and the adjacent listed building.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

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

126.1 Litter Picking (Cllr Norton Mahy). The event on Saturday 20 April was being advertised.

126.2 Planning Advisory (Cllrs Chris Button and Norton Mahy).

126.2.1 Section 106 claims. Communications with NHC were ongoing.

126.2.2 Affordable Housing Survey (*see item 125.2.5 above*). Publicity was ongoing.

126.2.3 Access to Ashwell station (includes the cycle/footway route and car parking) (*see item 125.1.6 above*). It was noted that investment would be required in Cambridgeshire rather than Hertfordshire. Engagement had taken place with representatives of the Morden's villages and they had some time ago undertaken a survey to gain quantitative data on car parking at the station. A parishioner who had led on the footway/cycleway aspect had established good contacts with the relevant landowner and represented the Parish Council in achieving the priority status in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP); it was agreed that he be asked for any update. **(Action: Clerk/Chair)** The impact of the Baldock development on Ashwell station had been pursued with Urban & Civic by the Parish Council; it was agreed that this be pushed again. It was agreed that a working party be established and those previously involved requested to participate.

126.3 Trees and Hedges (Cllr David Sims). *See 127.2 below.*

126.4 Yearbook 2024 edition (Cllr Norton Mahy). It was noted that positive comments had been received and that work had already started on the 2025 edition.

126.5 Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) group. *See item 123 above re Cllr Graham Lee's declaration of interest and dispensation to address the meeting.*

A proposal was made and it was **resolved** that Cllr Chris Button take the Chair for this item. Cllr Lee made a request that the existing working group 'EV Charging & Green Energy' (Cllrs Graham Lee and Ian Duffy members) be subsumed into the wider ZCA group that already included a number of parishioners and that this be a working group of the Parish Council. He reported that the involvement of the Parish Council would be beneficial when grant applications such as that for the Community Energy England feasibility study were applied for. He then left the room for this item.

It was **resolved** that the request be granted.

Action: Clerk

127 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. <https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/>*

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

127.1.1 The Old Rectory, Hodwell. NHC ref. 24/00575/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Erection of detached greenhouse. It was reported that there were, at the time of the meeting, no public responses to the NHC consultation on the NHC website; neither had the Parish Council received any direct communications from parishioners.

It was **resolved** that a 'no objections' response be made to the NHC Planning Officer.

Action: Clerk

127.1.2 80 Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 24/00651/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, front porch extension and raised rear decking area following demolition of existing garage. It was reported that there were, at the time of the meeting, no public responses to the NHC consultation on the NHC website; neither had the Parish Council received any direct communications from parishioners.

It was agreed that a request be made to the NHC Planning Officer for an extension to the consultation deadline to allow a decision at the May Council meeting; this to allow adequate time for councillors to consider the application and take into account any views expressed by parishioners.

Action: Clerk

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

127.2.1 51 Silver Street. Trees (Conservation Area): NHC ref. 24/00592/TCA. T1 Sycamore - Crown lift to 50% of the crown, Removing lower canopy to allow light into garden, without pruning the top of the crown. T2 Elder - Remove to ground level.

It was **resolved** that a 'no objections' response be made to the NHC Planning Officer.

Action: Clerk

127.2.2 25 Kingsland Way. Trees (Conservation Area) : Cherry - Reduce by up to 1m. Laurel Hedge, Viburnum Hedge, Oak - Reduce by up to 1m.

It was **resolved** that a 'no objections' response be made to the NHC Planning Officer with a request that the bird nesting season be taken into consideration. **Action: Clerk**

127.3 The 'no objection' response to the NHC Planning Officer was noted re TCA application Bushel And Strike, 15 Mill Street. NHC ref. 24/00652/TCA Trees (Conservation Area) : T1 Sycamore - Crown reduce by up to 30%. T2 Sycamore - Removal of lower limb.

127.4 Concerns re the removal of trees at Claybush Hill Meadow covered by a planning condition (see action point February council 109.4). See application documents on the NHC website NHC ref. 16/01797/1.

To note any further correspondence received and agree any actions. None received.

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/agendas_and_minutes/agendas/2024/claybush_hill_meadow_16017971_-_concerns_re_tree_works.pdf

127.5 To note the Planning Summary as of 26 March 2024.

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/planning/planning_summary_sheets/2024/planning_summary_as_of_26mar2024.pdf

128 Reports from Committees

128.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral report on the recruitment of a new clerk and agree any actions. The Chair reported that a new clerk had been appointed; the current clerk would provide handover training.

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

129.1 The Springs. It was reported that a tree had fallen into the river in the recent windy weather. Parishioners who had notified the Parish Council were commended. It had been established that there were no apparent safety issues. It was agreed that expert advice be taken, including from Natural England at their next scheduled visit, as to any action needed re its removal from the river.

Action: Deputy Clerk

129.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Nothing to report.

129.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets (see 125.2.3 above re the pavilion consultation and 125.2.4 above the playground consultation).

129.4 Small Gains (Accies pitch and allotments). Nothing to report.

129.5 War Memorial. It was noted that communications with potential suppliers for insurance re-valuation, cleaning and minor repairs was ongoing (see also 125.5.1 above).

129.6 Cemetery. Nothing to report.

129.7 Street furniture.

129.7.1 Litter bin review. The ongoing consultation was noted (see item 125.2.2 above).

129.7.2 Seats. The replacement seat in Angells Meadow sponsored by the WI had been ordered. It was noted that a review of all the existing seats was planned. Cllr David Sims requested whether there was budget available for a new seat at Small Gains; it was agreed that this would be considered.

130 Finance and Governance

130.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to 31 March 2024 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.

It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk

It was noted that the year end budget figures for 2023-24 would be finalised and included at the June Council meeting as part of the audit exercise (see 130.2 below).

- 130.2 Audit for the 2023-24 financial year. *To note the information from the External Auditor on items to be submitted and the schedule of dates for submission. To note arrangements for the Internal Audit agreed with the Internal Auditor.* These were noted.

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/cms/downloads/budgets-and-audits/audit_2023-24/external_audit_instruction_for_2023-24.pdf

- 130.3 *To consider any requests from community groups for funding from the section 137 budget (total budget allocation for 2024-25, £3,000).*

- 130.3.1 Zero Carbon Ashwell group. A proposal was made and it was **resolved** that Cllr Chris Button take the Chair for this item. Request for the hire cost of the Parish Room (£20.40) for a meeting. *See item 123 above re declaration of interest and dispensation to address the meeting.* Cllr Graham Lee requested the funding for room hire and then left the room for this item.

It was **resolved** that the request be granted.

Action: Clerk

- 130.3.2 Ashwell Community Land Trust Ltd. A proposal was made and it was **resolved** that Cllr Chris Button take the Chair for this item. Request for the cost of annual membership of the CLTNetwork to enable access to the group's advice (£90). *See item 123 above re declaration of interest by Cllr Norton Mahy, and declaration of interest and dispensation to vote on the grounds of quoracy by Cllr Graham Lee.* Cllr Norton Mahy left the room for this item. Cllr Graham Lee remained in the room and voted to ensure the decision was quorate.

It was **resolved** that the request be granted.

Action: Clerk

- 130.4 *To note the quote for reprinting the footpath leaflet and receive a proposal to accept.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/ashwell/parish-footpath-map/>

It was **resolved** that the quote be accepted.

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed: 21.10

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 01 May 2024, 7pm. This will be the AGM of the Parish Council and also include routine monthly business.

Appendix: Monthly accounts summary 31 March 2024

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st March 2024					
RECEIPTS				£	
R94	Santander	Reserve account interest		69.61	
R95	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (March)		68.75	
R96	Purchase of burial rights	CW/24.07		830.00	
R97	Chenery Funeral	CW/24.05		415.00	
R98	Savings Account	To the current account to top up		8,000.00	
R99	Paul Norman	AYB24-26		50.00	
R100	Ruth Holden	AYB24-27		50.00	
R101	Kate Cumins	AYB24-19		50.00	
R102	Collings Electrical	AYB24-11		90.00	
R103	Simon Tiling	AYB24-31		25.00	
R104	Moss Property Development	AYB24-4		90.00	
R105	Amber Osteopathy	AYB24-3		260.00	
R106	Crumps	AYB24-13		160.00	
R107	Avenge Electric	AYB24-16		80.00	
R108	Country Properties	AYB24-12		500.00	
R109	HBN Tree	AYB24-17		90.00	
R110	Chenery Funeral	CW/24.05		175.00	
R111	Bugs n Things	AYB24-9		90.00	
R112	Kingfisher Funeral	CW/24.08		285.00	
R113	BP Garden Services	AYB24-7		50.00	
R114	Nicki Holmes	AYB24-25		50.00	
R115	SJS Plumbing	AYB24-32		160.00	
R116	Neville Funeral	AYB24-24		160.00	
R117	Ashwell Garage	AYB24-5		90.00	
R118	Savings Account	To the current account to top up		2,000.00	
R119	Jane Buxton	AYB24-18		90.00	
R120	Tenant	Allotments rent 24/25		30.00	
R121	The Wright Accounts	AYB24-35		50.00	
R122	Martin Sheds Ltd	AYB24-21		90.00	
R123	Hertfordshire PCC	speed awareness contribution		87.50	
R124	Santander	Reserve account interest		66.80	
			Total	£14,302.66	
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
P245	DUO	Inv 11664webhosting March	25.00	5.00	30.00
P246	HMRC	PAYE February 2024	725.40	0.00	725.40
P247	DHH	Ground maintenance Inv 4377 & Springs hedge inv 4378	1,145.83	229.17	1375.00
P248	Ashwell PCC	Room hire invoice 24006 for meeting 26.3.24	20.40	0.00	20.40
P249	Savings Account	Transfer to Current account	8,000.00	0.00	8000.00
P250	Clerk	Reimbursement office costs	54.06	4.92	58.98
P251	Abacus Workplace supplies	Invoice 22140 Ink & other stationery	66.87	13.37	80.24
P252	The Wright Accounts Services	Invoice 1364 for February service	520.00	0.00	520.00
P253	Octopus Energy	Inv KI-FC2BA58F-0005 Toilets Electric 1/2/24-29/2/24	12.94	0.65	13.59
P254	BT	Invoice M002-2A	4.99	1.00	5.99
P255	Castle Water	Inv 10001589405 Pavilion Water rates 1/2/24-29/2/24	6.38	0.00	6.38
P256	Castle Water	Inv 10001587090 Cemetary Water rates 1/2/24-29/2/24	6.38	0.00	6.38
P257	E-on	Inv KI-E3D82FD1-0033 Pavilion Electric 1st February to 29th Feb	46.16	2.31	48.47
P258	Avenger Electrics	Inv 1105 - Works carried out at Pavilion	1,620.00	0.00	1620.00
P259	Edwards Cleaning	Invoice 02589 Cleaning of play equipment	335.00	0.00	335.00
P260	Altone Limited	Invoice 75827-28 Yearbook art work & publishing costs	4,885.00	48.00	4933.00
P261	Savings Account	Transfer to Current account	2,000.00	0.00	2000.00
P262	Clerk	Reimbursement office costs	32.37	0.00	32.37
P263	SLCC	Membership	229.00	0.00	229.00
P264	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	155.20	0.00	155.20
P265	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	262.82	0.00	262.82
P266	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,594.47	0.00	1594.47
P267	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	1,004.64	0.00	1004.64
P268	HMRC	PAYE March 2024	717.20	0.00	717.20
			23,470.11	304.42	
				Total	£23,774.53
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 31/03/2024	2,194.69		
		Reserve Account 31/03/2024	70,763.55		
		Total cash	£72,958.24		

Signed

Date