

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 07 February 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Martin Hoffman, Norton Mahy (Vice chair and Chair for this meeting) and David Sims.

Also in attendance: The Acting Clerk Jane Porter and Deputy Clerk Nicky Forrester. District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. PCSO Chris Brabrook and PC Tom Woollard from the Royston Police Neighbourhood Team. Two members of the public 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/>

104 Apologies for absence *To receive and accept apologies for absence.*

Cllr Ian Duffy (unwell), Cllr Chris Button (work commitment), Cllr Vinny Hall (work commitment), Graham Lee (away).

105 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).*

None received.

106 Minutes

106.1 *Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 17 January 2024 as an accurate record of proceedings. Draft minutes in appendix A.*

Resolved as approved and to be signed.

Action: Clerk/Chair

107 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 were suspended.

107.1 To note any updates on various ongoing matters.

107.1.1 **Police Neighbourhood Watch and the OWL scheme.** To note the ongoing input from a parishioner and PCSO Chris Braybrook from the Royston Neighbourhood Team. See minute 67.3 October 2023 council meeting.

PCSO Chris Brabrook praised the input of the parishioner coordinator. Material for a door drop had been provided and a publicity event in the village was planned for the morning of Saturday 23 March.

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/police-neighbourhood/>

107.1.2 **Community Drivesafe volunteer scheme.** To receive any updates on the proposals for a local group.

It was reported that there was a lack of volunteers to progress this. District Councillor Tom Tyson reported that the possibility of combining with other villages remained. It was agreed that it be re-publicised. PCSO Chris Brabrook reported that full training and support would be provided. PC Tom Woollard reported that speed checks had been undertaken at the end of last year and this would continue. **Action: Clerk**

<https://www.hertscommissioner.org/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/getting-involved/community-drivesafe/drivesafe-volunteer-guidance-v2.0-202204.pdf>

107.1.3 **Post Office outreach service.** It was reported that a parishioner had provided information; this confirmed what the Parish Council had previously been told and made the suggestion that the new arrangements, ie the reduced hours, be monitored to see what issues might arise.

107.2 **Annual Parish Meeting.** To note this to be held at Ashwell Primary School on Wednesday 20 March at 7pm.

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

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

107.3.1 A parishioner raised the following matters:

Re agenda item 112.2 [Unreasonable Complaints Procedure]. He raised concerns re clause 1.2 of the document and that his actions had not been vexatious. The Chair responded that this was not about one person in particular, it was a general policy.

He raised concerns that the procedure gave responsibilities to the Chair and Clerk who might not be independent. The Chair responded that this was based on an SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) model document.

Re January Council meeting. He alleged that there was 'a meeting after the meeting' and a 'secret discussion'; this was clear from the recording. He alleged that this was against the law unless certain procedures were followed and that there were reasons that made it private & confidential. The Chair responded that there had been no further debate after the meeting had ended.

Re January Council meeting agenda item 103.3 [Budget setting and precept proposals for 2024-25]. He had asked for the papers in advance of the meeting but his request

had been refused on the grounds that confidential information had been included; he disputed this. The Chair responded that there was one paper that included information about employees salaries and was thus considered confidential. Information would be published shortly in a summarised form.

Re January Council meeting. He raised his concerns that 'vexatious comments' had been made about him by Cllr Martin Hoffman; this was discourteous and had not been called out by others. The Chair responded that this was a matter for the councillor concerned.

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

107.4.1 Report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Planters at the War Memorial junction to prevent traffic mounting the kerb. The Herts Highways safety audit team had raised objections re the proposals for planters due to sight lines and had suggested an amended layout and/or bollards. A parishioner raised her concerns that this was not reasonable and would be a missed opportunity to enhance the area with planting. It was agreed that bollards and re-positioning of planters be considered, and also that the local British Legion be consulted.

Action: Deputy Clerk

Verge damage at Walkdens. Cllr David Sims reported that he had made contact with the site manager of the new development after the first incident and believed that they had instigated the repairs. It was agreed any new damage should be reported.

New footway at Townsend Meadow on the boundary with Station Road. *See January council 98.4.1.* District Councillor Tom Tyson reported that he had written to the NHC Enforcement Officer requesting action.

107.4.2 Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

North of Baldock extension and communications with the master developer Urban & Civic <https://growingbaldock.co.uk/> *See January council 98.4.3.* Parish council representatives were to be invited to 'community forum' meetings. A parishioner wished it to be noted that access to Baldock was important to residents of Ashwell and other villages not just for the station and the school but also for shops and services.

Ownership of the trees and hedge-line at Townsend Meadow on the boundary with Station Road. *See January council 98.4.2.* Herts Highways held the power to undertake a risk assessment on the dead tree, and to take action as needed, and then to follow up with enquiries as to who was the landowner.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

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

108.1 Green Energy & EV Charging Infrastructure (Cllrs Graham Lee and Ian Duffy). Nothing to report.

108.2 Litter Picking (Cllr Norton Mahy). This year's event was planned for Saturday 20 April.

108.3 Planning Advisory (includes matters re affordable housing and section 106) (Cllrs Chris Button and Norton Mahy). A meeting was scheduled for 15 February with the Rural Housing Enabler of CDAHerts re the Housing Needs Survey.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/housing-need-north-herts>

See also 109.3 below re the Hunts Close application.

108.4 Trees and Hedges (Cllr David Sims). The Greening Ashwell group had been helping. Orders for the next planting season were to be discussed.

108.5 Yearbook 2024 edition (Cllr Norton Mahy). The first full draft had been completed and would now go for proof-reading with a target date for printing at the end of February.

109 Planning matters: to include new and existing applications.

On the NHC website enter the reference number into the planning search box for full details.

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

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

109.1.1 **Bygrave solar farm. 22/00741/FP Land West of Ashwell Road Bygrave.** Re-consultation by the Planning Officer following amendments submitted to NHC. It was noted that this had been publicised to local residents by the applicant. It was agreed that the amendments made no change to the previous objections.

Action: Clerk

109.2 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC. None received.

109.3 **Land between Hunts Ridge and Ashwell House** (the field known as Hunts Close between the Ruddy and Lucas Lane). NHC ref. 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.

The refusal decision by the NHC Planning Control Committee was noted. The Chair thanked District Councillor Tom Tyson for his support of the Parish Council's objections. The section 106 claim made by the Parish Council would be followed up in case the application went to appeal.

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=3437&Ver=4>

Action: Planning Advisory group (Chris and Norton)/Clerk

109.4 To note the concerns raised by a parishioner re the removal of trees at Claybush Hill Meadow covered by a planning condition. *See documents on the NHC website NHC ref. 16/01797/1*

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

It was noted that this was contrary to a planning condition. A proposal was made that NHC be requested to enforce this.

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

Action: Clerk

109.5 To note the Planning summary sheet updated with NHC decisions on applications. See appendix below.

110 Reports from Committees

110.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral report on the recruitment of a new clerk and agree any actions. It was reported that a number of applications had been received and would be considered.

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/recruitment-for-a-pa/>

111 Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities

111.1 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported on works scheduled. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

111.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a liaison meeting with St Mary's representatives was scheduled. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

111.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. It was reported that works to trees near to the pavilion was planned. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

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

111.5 Street furniture.

111.5.1 Litter bin survey. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that communication with NHC was ongoing but plans were at an early stage. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

111.5.2 Seats. It was reported that quotes were in hand for the replacement seat in Angells Meadow to be sponsored by the WI. This would be progressed as soon as the wording of the plaque was confirmed. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

111.6 War Memorial and Cemetery Chapel. The update of professional valuations would be progressed now that resources permitted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

111.7 Other premises/responsibilities reports. It was reported that quotes were in hand for the annual tree survey and were being considered. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

112 Finance and Governance

112.1 **Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts.** To note the information up to 31 January 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**

112.2 **Unreasonable Complaints Procedure.** See item 103.4 January Council 2024.

It was proposed that a procedure based on the SLCC model document be adopted. See appendix C.

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

Meeting closed: 19:58

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 06 March 2024, 7pm.

[Annual Parish Meeting: Wednesday 20 March, 7pm at the school.]

Appendix: Planning summary as at 07 February 2024.

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 08 February 2024				
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
3 Shire End Close	23/02885/FPH	Full Permission Householder: Insertion of front and rear dormer windows and rooflights to existing roof and replace existing timber cladding with composite cladding.	See January council meeting agenda item 100.1.1 No objection	Permission GRANTED 07/02/2024
54 Station Road	23/02560/FP	Full Planning Permission : Erection of one detached 3-bed dwelling including vehicular access, landscaping, and ancillary works.	See December council meeting agenda item 90.1.1	Pending
Land Between 40 Gardiners Lane And Chain Cottage	23/01984/FP	Land Between 40 Gardiner Lane And Chain Cottage. NHC ref. . Full Planning Permission : Erection of one 3-bed dwelling, with vehicular access and parking.	November council meeting -see minute 81.1.2 Objection	Pending
Solar Farm: Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	New consultation on amendments	February council meeting - see minute 109.1.1 No change to previous objections.	Pending
Solar Farm: Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	Amendments to application previously considered <i>see also below</i>	Planning committee meeting 26 July 2023. Objection.	NHC Planning committee 14/09/2023: Decision deferred
Solar Farm: 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, 18.1.4</i>	
Dixies Meadow High Street	23/00666/FP	Erection of 12 dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, creation of vehicular access, public open space and children's play area.	Objection. See minutes Planning C'ttee 08 Apr. Also April Council 87.1	NHC Planning committee 14/09/2023 REFUSED
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)	NHC Planning Control Committee meeting 23 January 2024 REFUSED

Signed

Date

Appendix: Monthly accounts summary January 2024

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st January 2024					
RECEIPTS					£
R86	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (January)			68.75
R87	Savings Account	To the current account to top up			5,000.00
R88	Savings Account	To the current account to top up			5,000.00
R89	EH Crouch	CW/24.02 Interment			175.00
R90	Austins	CW/24.03 Burial			175.00
				Total	£10,418.75
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
P193	Wave	Inv 12923364 Pavilion sewage	65.04	0.00	65.04
P194	E-on	Inv KI-E3D82FD1-0030 Pavilion Electric 1st November to 30th N	118.64	5.93	124.57
P195	HMRC	PAYE For December 2023	1,025.01	0.00	1025.01
P196	DUO	Inv 11535 webhosting January	25.00	5.00	30.00
P197	E-on	Inv KI-18B0255C-0031 Toilets Electric 1/11/23-16/11/23	16.28	0.82	17.10
P198	ICO	Data Protection	35.00	0.00	35.00
P199	Octopus Energy	Inv KI-FC2BA58F-0003 Toilets Electric 1/12/23-31/12/23	13.80	0.69	14.49
P200	Edwards Cleaning	Invoice 02567 Toilets cleaning	237.50	0.00	237.50
P201	DHH Garden Services	Invoice 4237 grounds maintenance	770.83	154.17	925.00
P202	The Wright Accounts Services Ltd	Inv-1295 December's Work carried out	330.00	0.00	330.00
P203	The Blue Tree Co	Inv A-2727 Tree works at St Mary's Church	1,045.00	209.00	1254.00
P204	Savings Account	Transfer to Current account	5,000.00	0.00	5000.00
P205	E-on	INV KI-E3D82FD1-0031 Pavilion Electric 1/12/23-31/12/23	70.73	3.53	74.26
P206	Steve Dear Tree Services	Tree works - at Springs Inv 14946	640.00	128.00	768.00
P207	Hertfordshire County Council	Pension Audit work	50.00	0.00	50.00
P208	Castle Water	Inv 10001110290 Alloments Water rates 1/12/23-31/12/23	37.05	0.00	37.05
P209	North Hers Council	Inv 0002115992 Trade waste Recreational Grounds	122.85	0.00	122.85
P210	North Hers Council	Inv 0002115993 Trade Waste Streets	139.10	0.00	139.10
P211	North Hers Council	Inv 0002116151 Trade waste Springs	139.10	0.00	139.10
P212	Castle Water	Inv 10001133675 Cemertery	6.82	0.00	6.82
P213	Castle Water	Inv 10001141836 Pavilion	7.98	0.00	7.98
P214	CPRE Hertfordshire	Annual Sumbcription	36.00	0.00	36.00
P215	Pindar Creative	Reprint of Ashwell leaflets Inv 96458	715.00	0.00	715.00
P216	Savings Account	Transfer to Current account	5,000.00	0.00	5000.00
P217	Edwards Cleaning	Invoice 02574 Repairs in ladies toilets	220.00	0.00	220.00
P218	HMRC	PAYE For January 2024	717.80	0.00	717.80
P219	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	264.62	0.00	264.62
P220	Grounds officer	Grounds Officer salary	155.20	0.00	155.20
P221	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,594.47	0.00	1594.47
P222	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	1,004.64	0.00	1004.64
			18,598.82	507.14	
				Total	£19,105.96
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 31/01/2024	5,108.82		
		Reserve Account 31/01/2024	85,545.84		
		Total cash	£90,654.66		

Signed

Date