

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 06 March 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Chris Button, Ian Duffy, Graham Lee (Chair), Martin Hoffman, Norton Mahy (Vice chair) 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. Four members of the public were present and two 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/>

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

Cllr Vinny Hall (unwell).

114 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).*

Item 121.2. Cllrs Graham Lee and Norton Mahy both declared non-pecuniary interests as directors of the Ashwell CLT Ltd.

115 Minutes

115.1 *Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 07 February 2024 as an accurate record of proceedings.*

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/agendas_and_minutes/minutes/2024/draft_minutes_council_february_2024.pdf

Resolved as approved and to be signed.

Action: Clerk/Chair

116 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.

116.1 To note any updates on various ongoing matters.

116.1.1 To note the Annual Parish Meeting to be held at Ashwell School on Wednesday 20th March at 7pm. This was noted.

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

116.1.2 To note the further correspondence re the Outreach Post Office service hosted by St Mary's Church in the Parish Room and the publicity to gain local residents' views on the impact of the service reduction to two sessions per week. This was noted.

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

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

116.2.1 A parishioner raised a number of matters. (i) He commended Cllr Norton Mahy for his chairmanship of the February council meeting. (ii) He requested information on the Highways matters at the War Memorial. *See item 116.3.1 below.* (iii) He thanked Cllr Chris Button for further information re his complaint against the Clerk and asked who would be reporting once the complaint was resolved and Cllr Button confirmed that he would. (iv) He raised the matter of a previous complaint against Cllr Graham Lee; Cllr Lee responded that, in accordance with instruction from the NHC Monitoring Officer, this was a confidential matter and he was not prepared to enter into any debate.

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

116.3.1 Report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis. (i) War Memorial junction. The drainage issues were recognised by Highways but still to be resolved. The Deputy Clerk reported that she had met with representatives of the Ashwell British Legion; they favoured bollards rather than planters to resolve the issue of vehicles mounting the kerb and driving across the raised area. (ii) Hedges and trees at Townsend Meadow on the boundary with Station Road. *See February council 107.4.* Highways had now acknowledged their ownership of the dead tree and planned to remove it. (iii) Street light adjacent to no. 3 High Street. Highways were still to address various issues with this.

116.3.2 Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson. (i) North of Baldock development <https://growingbaldock.co.uk/>. Urban & Civic, the master developer, were to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on 20 March to give a short presentation. Archaeological investigations involving field trenching were due to commence on the site. It was noted that the Parish Council had requested to be kept involved in the next round of consultation. There had already been communications with Urban & Civic on several issues that would affect Ashwell including the issue of parking for railway users and this was to be followed up. (ii) Bygrave solar farm planning application. Nothing further to report. (iii) Soft plastics recycling. NHC had engaged in a national trial, involving all stages of the process, at Knebworth. It was intended to expand this and Ashwell might be included. Parish councillors expressed support for this.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

Signed

Date

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

- 117.1** Green Energy & EV Charging Infrastructure (Cllrs Graham Lee and Ian Duffy). Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had met with representatives of the village Greening Ashwell group who were keen to get involved. A leaflet and website were being planned and others encouraged to join and take the project forward.
- 117.2** Litter Picking (Cllr Norton Mahy). The event planned for Saturday 20 April was being advertised.
- 117.3** Planning Advisory (includes matters re affordable housing and section 106) (Cllrs Chris Button and Norton Mahy). (i) The Affordable Housing Survey would be distributed with the Yearbook <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/affordable-housing-s/> (ii) The section 106 claim re the Hunts Close application. Nothing further to report.
- 117.4** Trees and Hedges (Cllr David Sims). There were no issues to report re the Small Gains planting. Additional fencing to protect the new hedging at the Rec was planned. *See also 118.2 below re tree applications made to NHC.*
- 117.5** Yearbook 2024 edition (Cllr Norton Mahy). Cllr Mahy reported that delivery to households was likely to be on the weekend of 15/16 March due to delays at the printer.

118 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/>

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

- 118.1.1** 17 High Street. NHC ref. 24/00230/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Extension to existing single storey rear extension, erect first floor rear extension and alterations to fenestration to include reinstating first floor side window and insertion of ground floor side window.

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. Parish councillors noted that the proposals re the changes to the fenestration and also the general scale and nature of proposals could potentially have an impact on amenity, ie aspects of light and shading, privacy and over-looking, that might affect neighbouring properties. A proposal was made that no objections would be made but that the NHC Planning Officer be requested to take into account any concerns raised by the neighbours with regard to these matters that might have implications for them.

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

Action: Clerk

[Following the meeting the Parish Council received communications from the neighbours to the west expressing their concerns not only in regard to the amenity value of their property but also the impact on a Listed Building (Jessamine House).

In the response to the NHC Planning Officer a request was made 'Please can you ensure that the concerns of the neighbours are taken fully into account by yourself as the Planning Officer and, in this case, also the Conservation Officer'.]

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

118.2.1 Recreation Ground, Lucas Lane. NHC ref. 24/00269/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): 2x Beech, Lime - Reduce by a max of 50% . Applicant: Ashwell Parish Council.

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

Action: Clerk

118.2.2 77 High Street. NHC ref. 24/00381/TCA Trees (Conservation Area): T1. Bay - Fell. T2. Mulberry - Thin crown by 15% and remove deadwood. T3. Holm Oak - Lift branches over the shed giving up to 1m clearance and remove epicormic touching the shed.

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

Action: Clerk

118.2.3 3 Woodforde Close. NHC ref. 24/00511/TPO Trees (Tree Preservation Order) : Sycamore - Re-pollard to clear the solar panels.

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

Action: Clerk

118.3 *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 the response from the NHC Planning Officer.

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

This was noted.

118.4 *To note the NHC refusal for the application Land Between Chain Cottage And 40, Gardiners Lane. NHC ref. 23/01984/FP. Erection of one 3-bed dwelling, with vehicular access and parking.*

This was noted.

118.5 *To note the Planning Summary as of 29 February 2024. See updated version in appendix below.*

This was noted.

119 Reports from Committees

119.1 HR Committee. *To receive an oral report on the recruitment of a new clerk and agree any actions.* The Chair reported that three applicants were being interviewed.

120 Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities

120.1 The Springs. *To receive an oral report from Cllr Martin Hoffman.* Minor works had been completed; the tree survey was scheduled for late May/early June. The work by the volunteer group was commended.

120.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. *To note the liaison meeting with St Mary's representatives and receive an oral report from Cllr Martin Hoffman.* Tree works and other potential items of significant cost were to be reviewed.

120.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. *To receive an oral report from Cllr Graham Lee and agree any actions needed. To note the consultation on 'Renovation or replacement'. <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/the-pavilion--renova/>*

It was noted that consultation on the pavilion was an item for the Annual Parish Meeting, and with users, particularly re funding.

120.4 Small Gains (Accies sports pitch and allotments). *To receive an oral report from Cllr David Sims.*

Nothing to report. *See item 117.4 above re tree and hedge planting.*

120.5 War Memorial. *See item 116.3.1 above.*

120.6 Cemetery Chapel. *To note the tender requests issued for the insurance valuation. This was noted.*

120.7 Street furniture.

120.7.1 Litter bin review. *To note the consultation and receive an oral report from Cllr Norton Mahy. <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/consultation-on-our/>*

120.7.2 Seats. *To note the planned replacement of the seat in Angells Meadow to be sponsored by the WI. This was noted.*

120.8 *To receive any other premises/responsibilities reports. None received.*

121 Finance and Governance

121.1 *Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to 29 February circulated to parish councillors after the end of the month. Proposal that the summary of receipts and payments be issued with the draft minutes (see appendix below) 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

To note the proposals for changes to the accounts sign off procedures from the beginning of the next financial year and the purchase of new accounting software to support this.

This was noted.

121.2 *To consider a request that the hire cost of the Parish Room (£20.40) for the AGM of the Ashwell Community Land Trust be funded from the section 137 budget 'community support'.*

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

Cllrs Graham Lee and Norton Mahy left the room for this item. *See item 114 above re declarations.*

It was agreed that Cllr Ian Duffy take the Chair for this item. The Clerk was requested to provide additional information and noted that she acted as the clerk to the CLT.

It was **resolved** that the hire cost of the Parish Room (£20.40) for the AGM of the Ashwell Community Land Trust be funded from the section 137 budget 'community support'.

Action: Clerk

121.3 Audit for the 2023-24 financial year.

121.3.1 Internal Audit/Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit (Practitioners' Guide March 2023, 1.15.1). *To review the document, consider any amendments, and receive a proposal for acceptance. See website*

https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/agendas_and_minutes/agendas/2024/120.3.1_review_of_effectiveness_of_internal_audit_march_council_2024.pdf

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

Action: Clerk/Chair

To note any other arrangements for the Internal Audit. It was reported that a meeting had been held to discuss these (Clerk/RFO, Accounts Clerk and the Internal Auditor).

121.3.2 External Audit. *To note that arrangements for this to be scheduled following receipt of instructions from the External Auditor.* It was noted that instructions from the External Auditor were pending.

Meeting closed: 20.00

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 03 April 2024, 7pm.

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

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/annual-parish-meetin2/>

Appendix: Planning Summary as of 06 March 2024

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 06 March 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
17 High Street	24/00230/FPH	Full Permission Householder : Extension to existing single storey rear extension, erect first floor rear extension and alterations to fenestration to include reinstating first floor side window and insertion of ground floor side window.	See March council meeting minute 118.1.1 No objection but see request to the NHC Planning Officer noted in the minutes	Pending
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	Permission REFUSED 27/02/2024
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

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 29th February 2024					
RECEIPTS					£
R91	Santander	Reserve account interest			81.30
R92	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (February)			68.75
R93	Savings Account	To the current account to top up			5,000.00
				Total	£5,150.05
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
P223	DUO	Inv 11608 webhosting February	25.00	5.00	30.00
P224	E-on	Inv KI-E3D82FD1-0032 Pavilion Electric 1st January to 31st Jan	90.86	4.54	95.40
P225	HAPTC	Invoice 2324/299 Deputy clerk training	45.00	0.00	45.00
P226	Avenger Electrics	Inv 1077 PAT Test Phone box	35.00	0.00	35.00
P227	TJ Fire & Security	Inv 74131 Fire Extinguisher inspection Pavilion	62.16	12.44	74.60
P228	Abacus Cleaning & Hygiene Supplies	Inv 21837 Office Stationery	86.78	17.36	104.14
P229	DHH Garden Services	Invoice 4314 grounds maintenance	770.83	154.17	925.00
P230	Town House Publishing Limited	Inv 0023485 Listing Advert recruitment of Clerk	90.00	18.00	108.00
P231	Octopus Energy	Inv KI-FC2BA58F-004 Toilets Electric 1/01/2024-31/01/2024	13.84	0.69	14.53
P232	Castle Water	INV 10001282467 Cemetery Water rates 01/01/2024-31/01/2024	21.31	0.00	21.31
P233	Castle Water	Inv 10001291698 Pavilion water rates 01/01/2024-31/01/2024	20.77	0.00	20.77
P234	BT	Invoice M001 ZW - new contract	7.40	1.48	8.88
P235	BT	Invoice Q066 IM Phone & Broadband	174.87	34.97	209.84
P236	NHDC	Inv 0002121881 Dog waste bins 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024	1,341.40	268.28	1609.68
P237	The Blue Tree Company	Inv A-3701 Tree works carried out at th Recreation	550.00	110.00	660.00
P238	Savings Account	Transfer to Current account	5,000.00	0.00	5000.00
P239	M & J Oakley Ltd	Inv-1500 Works carried out at the Springs to steps & fencing	765.00	153.00	918.00
P240	Wrih Account Services	Inv- 01334 Work carried out in January 2024	445.00	0.00	445.00
P241	Environmental Cleansing Officer	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	295.14	0.00	295.14
P242	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	155.20	0.00	155.20
P243	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,594.47	0.00	1594.47
P244	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	1,004.64	0.00	1004.64
			12,594.67	779.93	
				Total	£13,374.60
MONEY AT BANK					
			Current Account 29/02/2024	1,802.97	
			Reserve Account 29/02/2024	80,627.14	
			Total cash	£82,430.11	

Signed

Date