

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

**Present:** Councillors Graham Lee (Chair) Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Chris Button, Ian Duffy and Martin Hoffman.

**Also in attendance:** Trainee Clerk Sally Roberts, 6 members of the public, District Councillor Tom Tyson, 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.** Apologies received from Cllr Yates (family commitment), Cllr Sims (unwell) and Cllr Hall (appointment).

50 **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.

51 **Minutes.** To approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 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**

52 **Parish Issues and Public Participation.** [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)  
Standing Orders were suspended.

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

52.1.1 To note any update on Ashwell Academical Youth Football Club (ACCIES) in an effort to bring back playing matches and training into the village. [Appendix A & Appendix B](#)

No further update to report but investigations were ongoing.

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

An application had been submitted to the value of £6500 for benches and seats in the village but had been rejected due to the lack of an accompanying safe-guarding policy and a constitution. District Councillor Tom Tyson agreed to take up the matter.

52.1.3 To note correspondence from [EatFeast](#).

It was agreed that the opinions of the pubs and those providing food in the village as well as community opinion should be sought. The Clerk would approach users of the

Rec to get their views. Charges that might be made, conditions to be imposed, and a final decision would be deferred to the next meeting. **Action: Clerk/All**

52.1.4 Parishioner concerns re dogs being exercised off-lead on the Rec. It was agreed that deterrent measures be looked into. **Action: Graham**

52.1.5 Parishioner concerns re normalisation of 'poor service responses' such as the Townsend Meadow footpath, broken signage and various issues re dogs off leads, not under control, owners not clearing up.

52.1.6 Parishioner comments re the pavilion and public toilets consultation. Were the sports club users being charged appropriately. We should be smarter at securing S106 monies. Were the 2022 figures quoted plus indexation -this was confirmed.

*See 54.3 below for comments from members of the public re the Hunts Ridge planning application.*

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

52.2.1 Report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Drainage issues. Back Street work had been completed. Cllr Graham Lee raised concerns re West End, Bear Lane, Kingsland Way where debris was banked up; proper road cleaning was long overdue and the current gully clearing schedule inadequate. It was noted that road cleaning is an NHC responsibility and gully cleaning an HCC. Cllr Lee requested that County Councillor Steve Jarvis and District Councillor Tom Tyson liaise and report back at the next meeting on the schedules and what action will be taken on what is overdue. Also that road cleaning is performed before gullies are checked be put to relevant parties.

Road resurfacing between Ashwell and Newnham had been completed.

Herts Lynx bus service. Funding had been secured to 2026 and the service would be run in house. An update on requirements was requested. **Action: Herts CC Steve Jarvis**

52.2.2 Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

TPO refusal by NHC at Claybush Meadow. This was due to Affinity Water objections; they had a reservoir next to the pumping station, which went around the development on the southern side and fed into the development and were anxious to avoid anything happening to the pipes. A map would be forwarded.

Planning Notification re a 9m telecoms pole by the village hall. Details would be forwarded for parish councillors to look at.

Waste supplier Urbaser had been bought out so vehicles would be rebranded; their waste contract was, however, not going to be renewed.

Recycling trial of soft plastic (bags etc). Ashwell & Bygrave would be involved in the second stage. Households involved would be notified imminently and issued with bags.

Development off Station Road/concerns that houses were being built too close to the hedge. Cllr Tyson would look into this. **Action: NHC Cllr Tom Tyson**

Standing Orders were reinstated.

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

**53.1 Planning Advisory.** To note any further information regarding S106 and awaiting the outcome from CDA Herts of the Affordable Housing Survey.

**53.2** Hunts Close planning application/section S106 claim. It was reported that a request for the criteria had been made to the district councillor responsible; the relevant officer was on holiday and there had been no response since 20<sup>th</sup> August. Cllr Norton Mahy would write again and District Councillor Tom Tyson agreed to assist. *See also 54.3 below.*

**53.3 Access to Ashwell station including the cycle/footway route and car parking.** (Cllr Lee). Cllr Graham Lee reported on a discussion with the liaison officer at NHC for the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The Cambridgeshire section had not been incorporated as a project and it had been suggested contact be made with the relevant South Cambs Cllr. County Councillor Steve Jarvis agreed to provide contact details.

**53.4 Trees and Hedges.** (Cllr Sims). No further update.

**53.5 Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA).** (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). Cllr Graham Lee reported that Community Energy England had made recommendations re achieving a feasibility study. An application had been drafted and sent to a consultant with the aim of making a formal application for a grant of £40K.

**54 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.*

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

**54.2** 17 Claybush Hill Meadow. NHC ref. 24/01655/FPH. Single story extension.

It was noted that the NHC Planning Portal was down and plans therefore not available; it was agreed that an extension to the consultation period be requested from the Planning Officer.

**Action: Clerk**

**54.3** To note any updates to Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street: 24/01444/FP: Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing). [See minutes August Council meeting.](#)

*From members of the public during the open session.*

Further concerns in addition to those already expressed were made by the neighbour re the boundary issue; he was of the view that the application should be rewritten and resubmitted. He requested a site visit by the Planning Officer.

A parishioner reported that he had written to the Planning Officer; he had given them his views on how the boundary matter should be handled.

A parishioner raised concerns re the adverse impact on the unmade trackway known as The Ruddy. The large trees forming a green tunnel along this ancient trackway would be vulnerable to damage particularly during the construction phase. The BOAT status should be reviewed to restrict traffic. It was noted that bollards to restrict access might be considered as part of any grant of permission by the NHC committee.

Cllr Graham Lee noted that since the August Parish Council meeting the [NHC Conservation Officer's report](#) had been published recommending refusal on the grounds of adverse impact on the Conservation Area.

Cllr Chris Button noted that this site was not allocated in the Local Plan, was not listed as a requirement to meet the 5 year housing supply and was not allocated under the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. He reiterated the specific concerns included in the Conservation Officer's report including the adverse impacts on the Conservation Area particularly The Ruddery, significant views, etc. He also raised his concerns on the impacts on the transport network, Kingsland Way, Ashwell Street, and the ancient highway. The need to address the boundary issue should be reinforced.

Cllr Ian Duffy concurred with the views expressed.

Cllr Graham Lee noted that the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan also required that any development should enhance the Conservation Area. The access arrangements would inevitably have an adverse impact on the ancient trackway. He also proposed that if permission was granted by the NHC Planning Committee that specific conditions should be imposed including to ensure retention of the public open space for the village in perpetuity, an agreed Section S106, and protection of trees along the boundaries.

Cllr Norton Mahy noted that there was still no agreed Section 106.

It was proposed that an objection be made to the application on the grounds stated. These to include; the site was not allocated in the Local Plan and not listed as a requirement to meet the 5 year housing supply; contrary to Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan policies [ASH 8 policy, ASH 9 policy]; adverse impact on the Conservation Area in particular on the ancient trackway known as The Ruddery; concerns on the adverse impacts on the transport network including Kingsland Way and Ashwell Street; lack of an agreed Section 106. Specific conditions to be imposed to ensure retention of the public open space for the village in perpetuity, to include a change of status to the adjacent BOAT and physical measures to restrict BOAT access to the east, move site vehicular access to the existing gate access, and to protect the trees on the site boundaries. There was also the need to address the boundary issue.

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

**Action: Clerk**

- 54.4 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. [See minutes August Council meeting.](#)

Further concerns in addition to those already expressed were made by the adjacent property owner; these had been included in their letter to the Planning officer. Concerns included highways issues (very narrow lane access and the number of houses), access points to existing and proposed properties very close together and use of the farm track adjacent to their garden; adverse design impact of red brick versus the existing Arlesey whites, the colour of render and roofing materials unsympathetic to the existing; light and noise pollution and other adverse ecological impacts; risk of damage to the foundations of their 1850's property; concerns re the adequacy of the water supply currently supplied to two properties from a local farm and with existing supply issues; privacy/overlooking issues.

Cllr Norton Mahy proposed that the Parish Council support the concerns of the neighbour especially those around sustainability and highways safety, the number of dwellings, the

design issues including privacy/overlooking issues, and also re 'planning creep' to extend the area.

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

**Action: Clerk**

54.5 To note the [Planning Summary](#) as of 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

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

54.6.1 1 Green Lane Ashwell. Remove a bough of the Horse Chestnut (application initiated by the Parish Council due to a branch overhanging graves in the Cemetery).

It was **resolved** that no objections be raised.

**Action: Clerk**

54.7 To note the [Tree Planning Summary](#) as of 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

54.8 Provisional TPO re Claybush Hill Meadow [Appendix D](#) See 51.2.2 above Report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

## 55 Reports from Committees.

55.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral report and agree any actions. Proposal to appoint a new Clerk/Proper Officer, following the retirement of the existing Clerk with effect 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

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

**Action: Clerk**

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

56.1 **The Springs.** (Cllr Hoffman). No problems reported.

56.2 **St Mary's Churchyard.** Grounds Maintenance. (Cllr Hoffman). No problems reported.

56.3 **Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets.** (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. See [2024 Pavilion Consultation working documents](#) for discussion.

It was noted that information had been received from Hertfordshire Sports Project re potential funding sources for physical activities in the village. It was reported that a group was looking at enhancing the playground facilities. County Councillor Steve Jarvis agreed to ascertain further information.

Cllr Button suggested there should be a review of fees & charges for use of the Rec & Pavilion facilities; Cllr Mahy would look at these.

**Action: Norton.**

Latest consultation document. It was agreed that residents should have a 4 week window to respond to the flyer; there would be a link in the synopsis document to the full document on the website.

**Action: Clerk**

56.4 **Small Gains.** (Accies pitch and allotments) (Cllr David Sims). Nothing further to report.

56.5 **War Memorial.** To note any updates.

- 56.5.1 Cleaning and minor repairs. It was reported that works were scheduled between the end of September and early October; the supplier had assured it would be done by Remembrance Sunday.
- 56.5.2 Insurance revaluation. Following professional advise from a contact recommended by Historic England it was proposed to increase the insurance cover as this was less than the cost of employing a specialist to value it; the existing cover would increase from £33K to £100K at an increased charge to the premium of £400.

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

**Action: Clerk**

- 56.6 **Cemetery.** To note the report from Cllr Norton Mahy. To note any comments raised following the newsletter announcing a volunteer group to tidy unattended graves mid/end September.

The two quotes for tree works following the routine survey and other minor works were noted; quote 1 was agreed as the preferred option. Cllr Chris Button would report further on other tree issues within the Cemetery.

Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he had 16 volunteers to tidy graves; this would take place after the contractors had carried out their scheduled work.

Cllrs Chris Button & Norton Mahy would liaise with the Explorers Group who are looking for voluntary work and may be able to help too.

- 56.7 **Street furniture.** Litter bin review. Report from Cllr Norton Mahy. To include the ongoing consultation and communications with NHC. Nothing further to report.

## 57 Finance and Governance.

- 57.1 **Budget tracking** and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

Noted that currently under budget on expenditure.

- 57.2 **Insurance Policy Renewal.**

To note information from the insurance broker re the renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and the Parish Council's request to increase the liability cover. *See 56.2 above re the War Memorial.*

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

**Action: Clerk**

- 57.3 **Annual Audit for the 2023-24 financial year.** No further update.

- 57.4 **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. As a response was awaited from St Mary's this was deferred to the next meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

- 57.5 **Community Governance Review.** To note any updates to the survey sent by NHC. [Appendix E](#)

A proposal was made that NHC be requested to start the process to reduce the number of parish councillors to nine (from 12).

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

**Action: Clerk**

Date of next full Council meeting: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024, 7pm.

Date of Finance Committee meeting: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024, 7pm.

DRAFT

*Signed*

*Date*