

Minutes

Ashwell Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 2 April 2025, at 7.00pm in the Parish Room

Present: Councillors: Graham Lee (Chair) Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Chris Button (arrived 7.15pm), Ian Duffy, Joan Yates, Martin Hoffman and Vinny Hall joining via Zoom.

Also in attendance: Clerk, Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk, Nicky Forrester, County Councillor, Steve Jarvis (until 7.45pm), Cllr Tom Tyson (until 7.45pm) and 8 members of the public. The meeting was recorded on Zoom. Please contact The Clerk clerk@ashwell.gov.uk if you would like a recording.

Please see website for appendices issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [Ashwell Village - 2025 Meetings Minutes and Agendas](#).

32 **Apologies for absence To receive and accept apologies for absence.** Apologies were received from Cllr Sims who is unwell.

33 **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).

Cllrs Mahy declared an interest in item 37.1 and did not enter into discussion or vote.

Minutes Proposal to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 5th March 2025. It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings and resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Chair

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

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

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

34.1.1 [To note any update on Ashwell Academical Youth Football Club \(ACCIES\) in an effort to keep more playing matches and training in the Village. Appendix A & Appendix B](#)

Cllr Lee has made contact with a landowner in the proximity of the rec and is awaiting a response.

34.1.2 To note any update to [water issue at Small Gains Allotments](#)

A plumber assessed and declared the leak is beyond reasonable repair, the Plumber has been asked to quote for installing a new standpipe.

Action: Deputy Clerk

- 34.1.3 To note [proposed neighbour survey](#) from the ACCIES regarding [Village Football Fun Event](#) to celebrate the 25th anniversary season of the ACCIES 13th & 14th June 2025.

Approximately 17 residents bordering the rec will receive a survey from the ACCIES providing an opportunity to vote for or against the proposed football anniversary weekend. It was resolved that 5 objections or above decides if the event goes ahead.

- 34.1.4 To note call for volunteers to help paint bollards 'Ashwell Green' and to paint the railings at the Springs.

Parishioners are invited to contact the clerk if they wish to join the volunteer group. Event to be publicised by Newsletter and the HUB. **Action: Clerk**

- 34.1.5 To note Parish Councillors to inspect the paint condition of street lamps and grade from 1* to 5* (5* = highest). Information to be sent back to Highways to further investigate the cost of repainting/replacing and path forward.

Councillors agreed to carry out a survey of street lamps condition. Clerk to devise plan for each councillor to assess. To be fed back to Highways. **Action: Clerk**

- 34.1.6 To note actions resulting from [Highways meeting](#).

Clerk reported on Highways meeting. Above link shows actions decided.

A parishioner asked that should an opportunity arise to widen the narrow footpath on the right-hand side approaching the village by West End, that this be taken into consideration. Clerk to add to Highways spreadsheet. **Action: Clerk**

- 34.1.7 To note village litter picking date of 5th April 2pm, rendezvous point, the Pavilion.

Clerk to post final notice by newsletter and the HUB. It was noted that Cllrs Button & Mahy made an advance start on Steeple Morden Road. **Action: Clerk**

- 34.1.8 To note call for volunteers to count the number of vehicles and vehicle types using the Ruddy, information to be fed back to Highways.

Councillors resolved to invite residents of Woodforde Close and The Ruddy to assist with a survey should they wish. Cllr Jarvis to establish the range and stated that we need to show significant usage for measures to be considered. Any restrictions would be applied for reasons of safety and damage to the fabric of the road. **Action : Cllr Jarvis**

- 34.1.9 To note request for installation of a [memorial bench](#) for Byron Searle at the Rec.

Councillors resolved to approve the siting of the memorial bench. Clerk to confirm the exact spot and liaise with the family. **Action: Clerk**

- 34.1.10 To note [correspondence to Sports Clubs users](#) regarding the hedge at the Rec

APC have asked sports clubs to speak with users and spectators requesting they use the official rec entrances and ask them not to squeeze by the hedge saplings alongside Lucas Lane. These are being trampled and damaged.

- 34.1.11 To discuss 20s Plenty Poster project at Ashwell Primary School.

Councillors resolved to approve the proportional cost of a 2025, 20s Plenty Poster designed by Ashwell School children. Historically this has been supported by APC, Highways and The Police. The Police are cutting back on community expenses, focussing

directly on policing. Ashwell School is willing to carry the cost of the Police's contribution. Clerk to advise PCSO.

Action: Clerk

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

34.2.1 To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

No report due to leaving early to attend an Annual Parish Meeting elsewhere.

34.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

No report due to leaving early to attend an Annual Parish Meeting elsewhere.

Standing Orders to be reinstated.

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

35.1 **Planning Advisory Working Group** - To note, any further information regarding S106 and to receive verbal update on housing needs survey.

Cllr Button reported that he and Cllr Mahy attended a conference call with NHC regarding S106 allocation of monies of approx. £17K from the Philosophers Gate development. Clarification for the projects to be submitted to NHC by APC.

Action: Cllrs Mahy & Button

35.2 **Access to Ashwell station** includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. (Cllr Lee).

Cllr Lee reported that he had correspondence from our local MP indicating that he has made contact with his counterpart in South Cambs and that a stakeholder meeting is to be arranged to discuss. APC have been invited to attend. **Action : Cllr Lee**

35.3 **Trees and Hedges** (Cllr Sims)

Signs asking users of the Rec to use official entrances need replacing. Deputy Clerk to reprint. Parishioner requested large shrub to be removed or cut back which is on Parish Council land.

Action : Deputy Clerk

35.4 **To receive update - Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group.** (Cllrs Lee & Duffy).

Awaiting grant application from CEE, expected in the Spring.

36 **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.

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

36.1.1 25/00581/OP: Erection of single dwelling on unused land (all matters reserved except for appearance, layout and scale) : Land Between Chain Cottage And 40, Gardiners Lane

Several parishioners outlined the history of various planning applications on the site. In 1980s the garden was separated by the owners and there have been numerous planning applications and appeals all of which have been refused by NHC.

The land is kept barren, trees felled and pesticides allegedly used. Photos were shown to the council of a before and after, from natural growth to a cleared site. Mature trees have their roots exposed and the decrease of wildlife was noted. An enforcement officer attended site after a call was lodged when trees in the orchard had been cut through.

Councillors comments were mixed. Compared with the previous application in a conservation area the proposed application does reduce the visual impact on sight lines of St Mary's Church by reducing proposed ridge height to 5 mtrs and positioning the house at the rear of the site. However, it would increase the density of dwellings in an area (the edge of the village), where the density should be reducing. It also removes what is a remaining area of land that could contribute to the environmental and visual impact at the edge of the village and concern was raised that the hedge and trees might be removed/damaged.

However it was also noted that the Neighbourhood Plan supports the building of smaller houses.

It was resolved to object to the application on the basis that 3 councillors voted against the application and 3 councillors chose to abstain from voting. Reasons for objecting were as stated above.

Current Applications awaiting NHC Decision:

- 36.1.2 To note any updates to 24/01444/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing), (Hunts Close).

No further update

- 36.2 To note any updates to [Appeal Consultation 22/03094/FP](#): Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping – To agree a response to the appeal consultation. See [Appeal letter to Inspector](#) and [Appendix B](#). (Hunts Close).

No further update

To note the [Planning Summary](#) as of 27th March 2025.

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

- 37.1 25/00714/TCA : T1: Laburnum - Remove to ground level : 55 High Street.

Councillors resolved to have no objection to the tree removal but to request to planning that a native tree be planted in its place.

Action: Clerk

- 37.2 To note the [Tree Planning Summary](#) as of 27th March 2025.

38 Reports from Committees

- 38.1 HR Committee. To receive any oral reports and agree any actions.

Nothing to report

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

- 39.1 **The Springs** Report from Cllr Hoffman.

Cllr Hoffman reported all is looking well at the Springs, nothing further to report.

- 39.2 **St Mary's Churchyard** Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman.

The church clock motor has been replaced and the timing mechanism reset.

39.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets.

To receive any updates from Pavilion Working Party. [2024 Pavilion Consultation working documents](#).

No further updates from last meeting.

39.4 Small Gains and Track – To note any updates (Cllr Sims).

The ACCIES are requesting a written agreement to use the field and access along the track that to-date has been a verbal agreement. Cllr Button suggested that we speak with a lawyer should one live locally and who could advise the wording. **Action: APC**

39.5 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy.

The box hedges have been replaced in the cemetery, no further work required in the foreseeable future. The next tidy up will be scheduled in the Autumn.

39.6 Street furniture - To note any updates Cllr Mahy

No updates, NHC are expected to remove selected bins imminently.

40 Finance and Governance

40.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts. To note the information up to month end 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.

None

40.2 Budget 2025/26 Update – To note any updates.

40.2.1 To receive an oral update on proposed [Fees for Club use of Rec & Pavilion](#)

40.2.2 Cllr Lee reported on discussions with the clubs regarding the increase in proposed fees. In regard to football club local prices, the Deputy Clerk ascertained that in North Herts, Beds & Cambs the average 3hr slot for pitch usage is £50. APC have proposed a fee amounting to £5 per AFC player for each home game.

The costs that APC have suggested cover increased maintenance costs, a fair spread of charges to those using the facilities rather than those who do not and having to bear an increase in their council tax.

Cllr Duffy proposed a phased increase of charges to the clubs.

It was resolved that APC will ask the football club to provide them with information previously asked for so that dialogue may continue with them.

40.3 To discuss and agree contractor to appoint for [Grounds Maintenance Contractor](#).

Cllr Yates and the Deputy Clerk met with a proposed new supplier for the Grounds Maintenance Contract. It was resolved that councillors agreed to award the tender to the contractor subject to the approval of revised specification and T&C. **Action: Cllr Yates/Deputy Clerk**

40.4 Annual Audit for the 2023/24 financial year. To note the status of the External Auditors review.

Still awaiting correspondence from the external auditor.

40.5 Audit for the 2024/25 financial year – to note documents that form part of the annual audit process:

In progress for another month or so.

40.5.1 Monthly bank reconciliations – To approve monthly bank reconciliation (available after month end and will be published with the minutes.

Councillors resolved to approved.

40.6 Bank Signatories - To note Proposal to change bank signatories.

It was proposed that the bank signatories of the former Clerk and Cllrs no longer serving be removed as a bank signatory and that Sally Roberts (Clerk) and Nicky Forrester (Deputy Clerk) be added as a bank signatory. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

40.7 Next APC Meeting - To note date of next APC meeting.

- Wednesday 7th May 2025

Issued by: Sally Roberts – Clerk Ashwell Parish Council

3rd April 2025