

Minutes of Ashwell Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 6th August 2025 at 7pm in the Parish Room

Present: Councillors: Graham Lee (Chair) Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Joan Yates, Chris Button, Ian Duffy.

Also in attendance: Clerk, Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk, Nicky Forrester, and 2 members of the public. The meeting was recorded on Zoom, for access to the recording please contact the Clerk clerk@ashwell.gov.uk.

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 Cllrs Sims and Hall and Cllr Hoffman who joined the meeting via Zoom.

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). None declared.

34 Minutes Proposal to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on **2nd July 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

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

Standing Orders to be suspended

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

35.1.1 To receive update to [water issue at Small Gains Allotments](#) – Two quotes in the region of £100 have been received for installing an isolating valve to allow local maintenance at the allotments. Deputy Clerk to draft response.

Action: Deputy Clerk

35.1.2 To receive update on [street lamp condition project](#) from Parish Councillors. Ongoing project to be fed back to Highways in time for the next meeting scheduled for 30th September 2025. Cllr Lee to undertake those assigned to Cllr Hall. Clerk requested results back by mid September latest.

Action: Cllrs Mahy/Lee/Button/Duffy/Yates

35.1.3 [Dog Poo Waste Bins complaints](#) – to discuss adequacy of bins and service following parishioners correspondence. Dog poos waste bins are emptied each Monday. NHC have informed us that if the waste is double bagged it can be disposed of in residents Purple Bin. Cost to the Parish Council to empty the 11 bins owned by the Parish Council

and located around the village on a weekly basis is in excess of £2,000 per year. Cllr Mahy to produce updated map of dog poo waste bins with markers and Deputy Clerk/Clerk to laminate and fix to existing dog poo bins.

Action: Cllr Mahy/Deputy Clerk

35.1.4 **Community Governance Review** – To note NHC decision that the allocation of Parish Councillors for Ashwell is set at nine as proposed by APC (a decrease of 3 councillors).

35.1.5 **Statement of Licensing Policy** – To note open to public consultation 28.07.2025 – 19.09.2025. This applies to future application such as the Bygrave Music Festival. Cllrs resolved to draft a letter for submission from APC. Cllr Button to draft response, parishioners to be notified and can use this example if they wish. **Action: Cllr Button**

35.1.6 **Parishioner correspondence** – To note and receive any updates to 24/01444/FP.

A parishioner stated the Inspector was very clear about how the proposal conflicts with Neighbourhood Planning policies. Whilst the proposal has a permanent negative effect and significance to Ashwell Street (The Ruddery) and the conservation area, the Inspector concluded that the advantage of house provision overwhelms this. The Inspector's view is that 5 years housing supply is not a ceiling. The question therefore is how do we ensure the yield from future development in Ashwell is optimised for the village?

A suggestion was made that the local transport schemes identified in NHC growth plan should include routes to Ashwell Station.

Cllr Lee to query with Cllrs Tyson & Jarvis if S106 monies could be used towards the Station access project.

Action : Cllr Lee

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

35.2.1 **To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.** Cllr Jarvis was unable to be present but sent the following report. Highways have agreed that since they incur trimming costs they would be willing to contribute to or pay for the cost of removing the tree opposite the war memorial that obstructs the street lamp and signs. APC to put in planning application to NHC for tree removal, and establish costs.

Action: Deputy Clerk

Highways have also agreed that they will attend to remedial work to stop the puddle forming at the dropped kerb by the war memorial. There is however no update to the rusting bollard bases.

35.2.2 **To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.** Cllr Tyson was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report.

All parishioners have been sent a letter with the dates of their bin collections. Parishioners are to rely on this and the updated NHC website. Confusion has arisen because the village has two different routes. One route commences with the purple bin on 8 August, black on 15 August, blue on 22 August. The other route commences with the black bin on 8 August, blue bin on 15 August, and purple bin on 22 August. The east side of the village will be left with a four-week gap before their first purple bin collection on 22 August, therefore they are being offered an additional interim one on 15 August. The 'Find your bin collection day' page in the NHC council website misleadingly showed this interim collection as being part of a three-weekly cycle but this has now been corrected.

Standing Orders to be reinstated

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

36.1 Planning Advisory Working Group - To note, any further information regarding S106 and to note [Final Draft APC approved on Ashwell Housing Needs Survey](#).

S106 – The Inspectors decision confirms APC will receive £55,000 contribution to be ring-fenced for the Pavilion from the Hunts Ridge development. In addition the offer by the developer for land (open space) transfer of ownership needs to be addressed. Whilst APC are keen for the ownership to be transferred they need to ensure deadline dates are met and to establish who is responsible for maintenance and structure. APC's preference is that it be kept by a Management Company but remain open to the village. Clerk to defer to next meeting on 3rd September 2025.

Action: Clerk

HNS – the Final Draft of the Housing Needs Survey has been issued and is live.

36.2 Access to Ashwell station includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. To note any update to [communications between APC and MP Chris Hinchliffe \(Cllr Lee\)](#) –The Baldock expansion puts pressure on the use of Baldock Station with potential impact to Ashwell Station. The developers have done nothing to consider this. The “Keep Baldock Open” Conservative leaflet has set up a survey for residents feed-back open until 11th August. A reminder to be put out on the HUB and Newsletter. Clerk to notify those Ashwell Residents who experienced difficulties when contacting NHC.

Action: Clerk

36.3 To receive update - Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group. (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). Awaiting funds to allow ZCA to fund website and publicity to attract community engagement.

37 Trees and Hedges (Cllr Sims) – To note any updates. No updates.

38 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.

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

38.1.1 25/01717/FPH : Single storey rear extension, insertion of rooflight to existing rear extension and relocate existing rooflights, alterations to fenestration and first floor rear extension : 77 Back Street, Ashwell.

The application does not appear to be overlooking other properties, there have been no public comments or complaints. Materials proposed are in keeping. The council resolved to have no objection.

38.1.2 [Decision Notice : 24/02659/AD](#) – To note erection of AA directional road signs.

The council resolved to contact NHC to gain an understanding of length of time the signs would be displayed with a suggested period of 12 months. APC to monitor.

Action: Clerk

38.2 Current Applications: any updates to 24/01444/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing), (Hunts Close). To note correspondence sent to [Manor Oak Homes](#). See above (35.1.6)

38.3 To note any updates of letter to North Herts Council regarding outstanding [footpath at Townsend Meadow](#). Cllr Lee reported that NHC are holding internal discussions/ recommendations that are waiting to be approved and as soon as there is agreement NHC officer will notify us.

38.4 To note the [Planning Summary](#).

39 **Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC.** To agree responses to any received. None

39.1 To note the [Tree Planning Summary](#)

40 Reports from Committees

40.1 HR Committee. To receive any oral reports and agree any actions. Actions for Cllrs to respond to Chairman with comments regarding employee appraisals. **Action: Councillors**

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

41.1 The Springs Report from Cllr Hoffman - To discuss replacement of current permanent sign and replace with [new larger sign](#) to allow more information to be displayed.

Clerk to prepare options to present to council of wooden/wood effect/painted external notice boards to include installation costs. Cllrs to feed back to Clerk any amendments to proposed wording in above link. **Action: Clerk/Cllrs**

41.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman. Nothing to report.

41.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. To receive any updates from [Pavilion Working Party](#). Cllr Mahy commented on behalf of the Pavilion Working Group who are working on the design and relying on an Ashwell architect who is currently very busy. The WG has been joined by a professional Quantity Surveyor and Project Manager whose expertise is in housing and the public sector, and who has a team specialising in costings.

For clarity Cllr Mahy explained RIBA Stage 7. This is the point when plans are conceptualised to then work in parallel in grants and funding, refine costs and design. At this stage we can then put our findings and ideas to the village.

41.4 To receive feedback regarding dogs at the rec and suggestion of [permanent external signs](#).

Clerk to prepare costs and options to present to council for the September meeting to include main entrances (gate opposite cemetery + entrance near Pavilion).

41.5 Small Gains and Track – To note any updates (Cllr Sims). Nothing to report.

41.6 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy. Another clean up in October is to be scheduled, further details to follow nearer the time.

41.7 Street furniture - [To note any updates](#) Cllr Mahy. The types of bins and those to be removed has finally been agreed with NHC. Cllr Mahy to update the bins map and check all is correct.

Action: Cllr Mahy

42 Finance and Governance

42.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts and bank reconciliation. 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.

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

42.2.1 To receive an oral update on proposed Fees for Club use of Rec & Pavilion. Cllr Lee to chase those contacts to finalise agreed fees. There was a suggestion also that other club users may contribute to paying fees. **Action: Cllr Lee**

42.2.2 [Tree Condition Safety Report](#) – to discuss and approve quotation to carry out report to include, The Springs, Ashwell Cemetery, Rec.

Cllrs resolved to accept Quote 2 but with a request that APC take ownership of the village tree map that the company have ownership of copyright. Deputy Clerk to pursue.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.2.3 [20s Plenty School Poster Project](#) – to discuss and agree printing quotation. The cost of the poster to be divided three ways by the School/HCC locality fund/APC at £133 each.

42.2.4 Risk Assessments to note and approve updated risk assessments for :

- [The Cemetery](#)
- [The Springs](#)
- [Merchant Taylors Green & Carters Pond](#)
- [Small Gains](#)

The councillors resolved to approve the Risk Assessments providing the following revisions are made :

Springs – cross-reference documents to RoSPA safety report and Tree Safety condition safety report. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

Cemetery – Amend Kerbstones wording. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

42.2.5 Annual Audit for the 2023/24 financial year. To note the Interim review received from the External Auditor, but a final report is pending their review of correspondence from a Parishioner, and further correspondence from objector and External Auditor.

To consider the parish council's response and costs which would subsequently be charged to the Parish Council.

APC have been advised that a parishioner has decided to proceed with their complaint. This carries costing consequences to Parish Council funds.

42.2.6 Proposal to discuss a financial matter under a private session after the meeting.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted, all in favour.

Exclusion of Press and Public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the separate councillor meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely:

The separate councillor meeting proposed and resolved that the parishioner objections against the Parish Council to be investigated by the external auditor in respect of the 2023/24 AGAR (accounts) will have a significant financial cost impact on the PC and it was agreed that in future years we would need to build a reserve to cover legal costs associated with parishioner complaints.

42.2.7 Audit for the 2024/25 financial year – Internal Auditor has signed and authorised the 2024-25 audit and all documents have been sent to the External Auditor. Awaiting External Auditor response.

43 **Date of next meeting :** 3rd September 2025 at 7pm in the Parish Room. Cllr Lee is away and the meeting will be chaired by the Vice-Chair, Cllr Mahy.

The meeting closed at 8.34pm.