

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5 March 2025, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

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

Also in attendance: Clerk, Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk, Nicky Forrester, County Councillor, Steve Jarvis, 3 members of the public. The meeting was recorded on Zoom. Please contact The Clerk clerk@ashwell.gov.uk if you would like a recording of the meeting.

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

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

23 **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 Lee & Mahy declared an interest in item 31.1 CLT and withdrew from the room whilst the item was discussed and voted upon.

24 **Minutes Proposal** to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 5th February 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.

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

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

25.1.1 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](#)

No further progress in determining further sites due to other PC priorities.

25.1.2 To note any update to reintroducing [Drive Safe scheme](#) volunteers.

Information received from the PCCO do not allow a Drive Safe Scheme to operate on a 20mph road. Cllr Jarvis stated that the previous PCCO allowed the scheme to operate. Alternatively, and potentially costly, is the installation of a speed monitoring device that displays registration of vehicles driving over the speed limit, but this would be in the hands of HCC Highways to consider and fund.

Cllr Jarvis and Clerk to both write to the PCCO to ask them to reconsider operating a Drive Safe Scheme on a 20mph road.

Action: Cllr Jarvis/Clerk

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

The plumber has visited the site and a repair quote is imminent. A second quote will be sought by the Deputy Clerk for comparison.

25.1.4 To note [correspondence](#) with ACCIES regarding [Village Football Fun Event](#) to celebrate the 25th anniversary season of the ACCIES 13th & 14th June 2025.

Currently awaiting a response from the ACCIES regarding a draft document that APC has requested be sent to neighbours at the Rec advising them of the event.

25.1.5 To note the [Decision Notice](#) of Bygrave Plantation License Review.

Currently licence granted until 1am Saturday & Sunday and 11pm on other evenings. Unfortunately the variation of their licence application is due to be heard in March and it is unclear whether that could reverse the decision taken in February or not.

Clerk to contact Cllr Tyson to enquire if there is anything further APC can do prior to the March hearing.

Action: Clerk

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

A Community Partner from NHC was at the meeting to introduce herself and is working with Cllrs Jarvis & Tyson. Our Community Partner will be able to guide us to how to access grants and general assistance in the community.

25.2.1 To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Cllr Jarvis advised that a speed volume survey in Kingsland way has not been carried out yet.

Street lamps issues – some are painted with lead paint and would be cheaper to replace. It would be helpful for each street lamp to be identified as to its condition. Consideration to be given to a volunteer group to identify street lamps with location and details.

It was reported that the railings at the Springs that were painted pre-Covid are in a poor state with some of the base metal on the wall rotting.

The Deputy Clerk reported that Natural England have notified her that surface water from the road or overflow drain is going into the Springs which carries SSSI status. Deputy Clerk to liaise with Cllr Jarvis.

Action: Deputy Clerk

Cllr Jarvis reported on local bus service ambitions which is to make Bus 91 an hourly service between Royston, Ashwell and Letchworth. This project has been held up and may be in operation within a year or so.

Cllr Lee stated that pot holes in Bear Lane have increased near the entrance to Dixies Close. Deputy Clerk to fault report to Highways

Action: Deputy Clerk

Cllr Jarvis announced that a £1m pledge has been made to address rural road edges in Hertfordshire but does not know the details of how it may be applied.

25.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

Cllr Tyson sent the following report in his absence: In regard to the Bygrave Plantation licence review. The hearing is next week and will consider the licence holder's application to vary the licence to allow up to four events with a capacity of up to 24,999 visitors per year, increase the size of the licensable area further towards Newham (for car parking) and vary the hours of licensable activity.

Cllr Tyson has asked the licensing officers for clarification about the relative standings of the licence as revised at the previous hearing, which is still subject to a 28-day period when the new conditions can be appealed, and the effect of varying the licence as it (presumably) still currently stands prior to the application of the new conditions after the appeal period has expired on 17 March. [Click here for the report pack](#)

[Click here for the full decision notice and minutes of the sub-committee meeting:](#)

The revised licence from the 17 February hearing is the one to which the variation would apply if approved next week (even if it were appealed).

In regard to street cleaning and gully drain unblocking Cllr Tyson has written to the street cleansing officer for an update as none of the promised work appears to have been carried out.

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

26.1 Planning Advisory Working Group - To note, any further information regarding S106 and to note update of report on Ashwell Housing Needs Survey, please contact Clerk to view a hardcopy of report at clerk@ashwell.gov.uk - See link to **Affordable Housing Survey**.

It was agreed that the HNS would be raised at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19th March for parishioners to comment. There were 142 responses to the HNS. Interpretation and what happens next is most important. A parishioner commented that many householders cannot access the housing market and has concerns how the data has been assembled and how it appears in the report. Parish Council to liaise with the report author at CDA Herts.

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

Cllr Lee to chase up MP

26.3 Trees and Hedges (Cllr Sims) – No further updates.

Cllr Button stated that a large shrub/tree in causing problems in Swan Street and queried ownership. If it is on APC land it would need to be removed. Cllr Lee request the Deputy Clerk to contact the tree consultant to recommend path forward. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

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

The Working Group is continuing with due diligence prior to making a recommendation to APC and still awaits confirmation of when they are to receive funding.

27 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.

27.1 New consultations received from NHC. To note any correspondence and agree responses. No new planning matters to discuss

27.2 Current Applications awaiting NHC Decision:

27.2.1 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 updates.

27.3 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 updates.

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

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

28.1 To note any updates to 25/00286/TCA : The Granary House, West End. T1, T2, T3 Cypress, Fell.

3 Cyprus trees are growing against the wall of the property and may grow out of control and damage the wall. It was resolved that Councillors had no objection but would recommend the 3 trees are replaced by native non-invasive trees. **(Action: Clerk)**

28.2 To note any updates to 25/00357/TCA : 57 High Street : T1: Laburnum - Remove to ground level.

Cllrs resolved there was no objection to this application. **(Action: Clerk)**

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

29 Reports from Committees

29.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral reports and agree any actions.

No further updates

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

30.1 The Springs Report from Cllr Hoffman.

Cllr Hoffman had reported that everything is in hand .

30.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman.

Cllr Hoffman had reported that everything is in hand .

However, following replacement of the motor in the church clock which was installed last month APC has received reports from a parishioner that it is not sounding as it should. Any observations from parishioners please advise Deputy Clerk. Deputy.clerk@ashwell.gov.uk

30.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. To receive any updates from Pavilion Working Party. [2024 Pavilion Consultation working documents.](#)

Initial meeting of the working party with introductions, background and recommendations for focus took place. Their initial task is to research relevant sports authority specifications for pavilions so that a new/upgraded design could be developed for consideration. Once a feedback report has been produced it will be issued.

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

No further update, there needs to be further discussion with the ACCIES regarding the condition of the track as they are mostly the users.

30.5 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy.

Cllr Mahy reported that 12 people from a working party attended the cemetery tidy-up with favourable feedback. It was a successful task and Cllr Mahy received a letter of thanks from a parishioner. Looking at a further event in October.

Box hedges were diseased and have been taken out with stumps ground down. New Yew hedges have replaced the box hedge. Yew hedges will be 1m high approx, grass seed to be scattered but will need to be watered. APC will request the maintenance employee to water the area.

Cllr Button suggested a few 'before and after' photos to be taken for the PC news update.

30.6 Street furniture - To note any updates Cllr Mahy.

NHC Shared Waste Services will be replacing two round bins with square bins and have been notified which are to be taken out and which should stay.

31 Finance and Governance

31.1 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.

To approve monthly bank reconciliation. Accounts Clerk has reconciled monthly accounts. Cllrs resolved to approve.

31.2 Grounds Maintenance Contract – To receive [quotations](#) following invitation to tender.

The current Grounds Maintenance Contractor has been in place for 2 years and has delivered an inconsistent service. Year one they delivered a good service, Year two was less so. Cllr Lee felt that we should stay with the current supplier but monitor closely. Cllr Yates to meet with the Deputy Clerk to draw up a service level agreement of what to expect and when prior to discussions. Path forward is to request notification of work to be undertaken by the contractor and notification of completion to ensure work is satisfactory.

It was resolved that following creation of a service level agreement there should be a meeting with the contractors who submitted Quotes 1 & 2 prior to a decision being made on who to appoint.

31.3 Grass Cutting & Fertilising Recreation Ground – To receive [quotations](#) for the grass cutting and fertilising of the Recreation Ground.

See 31.2 above.

- 31.4 **CLT**– To consider a request that the hire cost of the Parish Room (approx. £20) for the AGM of the Ashwell Community Land Trust and of the £90 [renewal fee](#) be funded from the section 137 budget ‘community support’. Click here for link to [Community Land Trust](#).

Cllrs Lee & Mahy left the room and Cllr Button chaired the meeting to consider the request. Cllr Button proposed the payment. Cllr Duffy said it adds potential value and Cllr Yates agreed. Cllrs resolved to approve payment.

- 31.5 **Budget 2025/26 Update** – To note [overspend](#) on administration costs of 2024/25 budget. Administration costs increase of £3290 against budget. Proposal to move sum from reserves into general account.

It was resolved that Cllrs move £3290 from reserves into general account.

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

Cllr Lee & Button will be meeting with representatives from the Clubs regarding the increase of proposed fees.

- 31.6 **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.

No further update.

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

- 31.7.1 To note [Review of Effectiveness](#) was reviewed at the Finance Committee meeting October 2024 and to consider if any changes are required.

Cllrs resolved to use the same conditions for the internal auditor for the current year, and as nothing has changed, to approve the Review of Effectiveness.

- 31.7.2 Monthly bank reconciliations - To approve monthly bank reconciliation (available after month end).

Cllrs resolved to approve the monthly bank reconciliation.

- 31.8 **Bank Signatories** - To note any updates to change to reflect new Clerk.

Still waiting on the bank.

- 31.9 **Next APC Meeting** - To note date of next APC meeting and Parish Meeting 2025

- Wednesday 2nd April 2025 at 7pm
- Parish Meeting in the School Hall at 7pm on Wednesday 19th March 2025.

Meeting ended at 20.40 hrs