

Minutes of Ashwell Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 4th March 2026 at 7pm in the Parish Room

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

Also in attendance: Clerk, Sally Roberts, Deputy Clerk, Nicky Forrester, Cllr Tyson, and 2 members of the public.

Please see click on links for papers issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [Ashwell Village - 2026 Meetings Minutes and Agendas](#).

140 Apologies for absence. To receive and accept apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllrs Sims, Yates & Hoffman who are unwell.

141 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). No interests were declared.

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

143 Minutes Proposal to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on **4th February 2026**. It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings and resolved that the proposal be accepted. Proposed by Cllr Mahy seconded by Cllr Button, all in favour. **Action: Clerk/Chair**

Standing Orders to be suspended

143.1 To hear any new matters raised (members of the public and councillors can raise any Parish related matters). No matters raised.

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

143.2.1 To receive a report from the Leader of HCC Steve Jarvis. Cllr Jarvis will give a report at the Parish Meeting on 18th March 2026.

143.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson. Cllr Tyson reported on 3 items:

1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - to remind the public that consultation closes on 26th March. The consultation has been publicised by Newsletter and the HUB. APC have already completed the online survey. Cllr Tyson received correspondence from many parishioners expressing their concerns that Arbury Ward should not be taken out of central authority if the 4 way unitary council is adopted. It is important for parishioners to communicate their views via the survey. <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/hertfordshire/> The Government should reach a decision early Summer. By September the hope is that they will be setting up a joint committee to

oversee events. In May 2027 there will be an election of councillors for new authorities. In 2028 the council will cease to exist in its current form.

Local Plans will continue to apply covering the territory they already cover. The objective is to have the new local plan in 2028 when the new authorities take control but it will still be a local plan for North Herts.

2. A consultation supplementary planning document (250 pages) is to become part of the current local plan. The document is called the Design Code and covers layout, open spaces, play areas, transport, architecture design and material etc. [Design Code Supplementary Planning Document | North Herts Council](#).

Cllr Button suggested that Parish Councillors review it and form a response. Cllr Button also suggested a review of the current Neighbourhood Plan. Timeline to do so to be agreed amongst councillors. **Action: Cllrs**

3. A trial on arrangements for forming new election practices and how people can vote is currently in process. Voting hubs to be opened early, QR codes on ballot papers etc. (Ashwell unaffected currently).

Standing Orders to be reinstated

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

144.1 Planning Advisory Working Group - To consider and approve [S106 application](#) for planning application 25/02547/FP Land off Station Road, South & West of Senuna Park. Cllr Button spoke with planners who advised it is normally acceptable to submit the document stating it is subject to amendments. Cllrs resolved to approve the draft subject to possible small revisions.

144.2 Access to Ashwell station includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. To note any update. Cllr Lee to approach Steeple Morden PC to gain their views on parking and station access.

Action: Cllr Lee

144.3 To receive update - Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group. (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). Meeting of WG on 5th March to review 2nd report. Cllr Lee will report at next months meeting.

145 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.

145.1 26/00330/FPH, 77 Back Street, removal of existing rear French door and Window to create a bi-folding door, replace the existing rear/side kitchen door with a window, brick in fill and insertion of rooflight to existing rear roof slope. Cllrs resolved to have no objections, all in favour.

146 Current Applications: any updates:

146.1 24/01444/FP: Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing), (Hunts Close). No update

146.2 25/02571/OP Growing Baldock – No update.

147 [Planning Summary](#)

148 **Footpath at Townsend Meadow** - To note any updates. Cllr Lee wrote again to NHC, awaiting a response. Previously Cllr Lee was told NHC were in conversation with Highways and was advised there is no plan to instigate a legal process to ensure the developer fulfils their obligation to install a footpath.

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

149.1 **26/00462/TCA**, to remove 1 Holly and Crown reduction by 2m max of one Walnut : 13 Dixies Close, Ashwell. Cllrs resolved to have no objections.

150 [Tree Planning Summary](#)

151 Reports from Committees

151.1 HR Committee. To receive an oral reports and agree any actions. Nothing to report.

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

152.1 The Springs Report from Cllr Hoffman. Parishioner correspondence received regarding a desire to drink the water at the Springs. Deputy Clerk has responded to advise that in June 2025 the Parish Council stated they have no responsibility to test the water.

152.2 St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance. Report from Cllr Hoffman. Grounds Maintenance grass to be cut early April.

152.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. To receive any updates from [Pavilion Working Party](#). Cllr Lee and the architect held a meeting with the Head Teacher at Ashwell Primary School who has agreed that the architect can work with the children to provide work practice for pupils on architecture and to involve them in ideas for the Pavilion.

Playground facilities to also be considered by the Ashwell Primary School Council (consisting of representatives of pupils from each year who will liaise with class members). Parents and older children from their families will also be invited to comment.

152.3.1 To discuss replacement of swing seats on both sets of swings at the play area. New seats to be fixed to the existing chains, and installed by Ashwell's ECO Maintenance Officer. Cost approx £500.

152.4 To note communication from [Christy's Kitchens](#) cancelling the Food Festival Day for 2026. Reason given, they are concerned it would be replicating that put on by the Ashwell Show.

152.5 Small Gains and Track – To note any updates from Cllr Lee. Cllr Lee & Button to meet with ACCIES on 5th March and will update Cllrs at the next meeting.

152.6 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy. The working party tidied graves and cut back vegetation, Cllr Mahy thanked the 12 volunteers who gave their time.

152.7 Street furniture - To note any updates Cllr Mahy, nothing to report. Benches were reported as looking worn, PC to monitor when weather improves. **Action: Cllrs**

153 Finance and Governance

- 153.1 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.
- 153.2 Budget 2025/26 Update** – To note any updates.
- 153.2.1 To receive a verbal update on proposed licence agreement. To be discussed at ACCIES meeting on 5th March with Cllrs Lee & Button **Action: Cllrs Lee & Button**
- 153.3 Annual Audit 2023/24 & 2024/25** – To note any updates.
- 153.3.1 Annual Audit for the 2023/24 financial year. No update. Clerk to enquire when update/timing for the auditor findings can be given. **Action: Clerk**
- 153.3.2 Audit for the 2024/25 financial year – Internal Auditor has authorised the 2024-25 audit and all documents have been sent to the External Auditor.
- 153.4 Annual Audit 2025/26**
- 153.4.1 To note **Review of Effectiveness** was reviewed at the Finance Committee meeting October 2025 and to consider if any changes are required. No changes were made.
- 153.5 Grounds Maintenance Contract** – to note renewal of contract with Countrywide who were the appointed contractor in 2025. Agreement reached with Contractor and will commence 1st April 2026. Clerk to meet prior to new contract dates. **Action: Clerk**
- 153.6 Code of Conduct Complaint** – to provide verbal statement in response to the confidential communication received from Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd.

Ashwell Parish Council received a response from the solicitor appointed by NHC and they have asked that Cllr Hoffman make an apology, unfortunately due to illness Cllr Hoffman is not present and has asked that the following statement be read: *“Cllr Hoffman would like to apologise for using part of a word that may have caused offence towards the end of the Parish Council meeting on 1st October 2025”.*

Cllr Lee stated that he would like to remind members of the council that we should always uphold high standards in office and behave respectfully to members of the public and amongst ourselves.

Cllr Mahy said it would be helpful to clarify what the decision meant. This was a decision to informally resolve the complaint. First of all he stated what it does not mean.

According to the NHC Complaints Handling Procedure, *“an informal resolution where a complaint is dealt with informally, it is important to note that there has been no finding that the code of conduct has been breached”.* So this is not a finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Appendix II of the NHC Complaints Handling Procedure goes on to say what an informal resolution really is: *“An informal resolution is a more proportionate way of dealing with relatively minor allegations, one-off incidents, or underlying disagreements between individuals. This could be an apology, training, supervised mediation or a combination of these things. It should be borne in mind however that dealing with a matter by informal resolution at the initial*

assessment stage is making no finding of fact as there has been no formal investigation, or finding by the Standards Sub-Committee and therefore this will be confidential, unless this is a post investigation and the matter has been referred to the Standards Sub-Committee”.

This is what an informal resolution means.

- 153.7 **Village Museum**– to discuss appointment of a Trustee. Historically the PC has appointed a trustee for a number of years. Following Cllr Hoffman leaving the Museum Trust there is a vacancy. The museum is soon to be 100 years old and is highly regarded in the North Herts area. Cllr Mahy suggested that, after her recovery, Cllr Yates may be interested in the role if not he is happy to be appointed.
- 153.8 **Moss Cottages** – to discuss appointment of a Trustee. Moss Cottages have a candidate in mind who is not a parish councillor and have asked the Parish Council to approve their choice of Trustee. Cllrs have no objection to Moss Cottage appointing their suggested trustee.
- 153.9 **Review of cemetery fees** – effective 1st April 2026. Cllrs resolved to increase the cemetery fees at an inflationary increase - of all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

Date of Parish Meeting : Wednesday 18th March 2026 at 7pm in the School Hall

Date of next PC meeting : 1st April 2026 at 7pm in the Parish Room.

Meeting closed at 8.03pm