

Minutes of Ashwell Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 4th February 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, Cllr Jarvis and 22 members of the public.

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

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

125 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.

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

Minutes Proposal to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on **7th January 2026**. It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings subject to the following amendment: *Item 112 Planning Advisory Working Group “circa £150,000” is inaccurate, no sum was decided upon.* It was resolved that the proposal (subject to the above amendment) be accepted. Proposal Cllr Mahy seconded by Cllr Duffy, all in favour.

Action: Clerk/Chair

Standing Orders to be suspended

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

126.1.1 Q&A with Chris Hinchliff MP – to open the floor to questions relating to the A505 and road safety and footpath access to Ashwell Station.

See attached Q&A notes.

126.1.2 Playground at the Rec - to note and discuss possible improvement scenarios.

A member of the public highlighted the poor state of the playground, potential safety issues and the need for renovation.

ROSPA advise on safety issues, the latest report did not highlight any. APC recognise the need to spend monies on the Playground, Toilets and Pavilion.

There is £30,000 ring fenced exclusively for the playground. APC are aware the playground is as important as the Pavilion and Toilets. Realistically the timeframe for

these projects could be 2-5 years, but APC can look at what physically needs repairing, and can be funded from existing resources.

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

126.2.1 To receive a report from County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Highways schemes for new financial year. Agreed to carry out traffic calming feasibility in Newnham way, parking restrictions at West end, SID in Lucas Lane, covered in the budget for coming financial year. Cllr Lee stressed the desire for a number plate recognition SID rather than smiley face SID.

126.2.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson. Street cleansing request submitted for Bear Lane, Kingsland Way, Newnham Way/ West End. Ashwell Street sign to be installed in March.

4 houses on Ashwell Street Ruddery, have been approved along with Kirby Manor Farm (with conditions).

LGR reorganisation consultation due to go live on 5th Feb. Link available at hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk and closes in 7 weeks.

NPPF planning locally – The beginning process of new Local Plan, target date for completion, 2027. However in 2028 NHC ceases to exist and it is unknown how Local Plans will be considered under new unitary councils. Odsey may be a potential area for development due to location of station.

Standing Orders to be reinstated

127 **Playground at the Rec** to note and discuss possible improvement scenarios.

The Pavilion, Playground and Toilets project is lengthy. Delivery estimate is 5 years. Cllr Mahy suggested the projects could be split into phases and the playground should include significant investment for play equipment, and to serve needs of older children too.

It was suggested that a sub Working Group of the Pavilion Working Group could be formed to focus on the play area.

Proposal –. Short term repair/replace worn equipment and enhance existing provision using existing funds, longer term to widen the brief of pavilion project and look at delivering improvements ahead of the building itself. Proposed by Cllr Button, seconded by Cllr Duffy, all in favour.

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

128.1 Planning Advisory Working Group - To receive verbal update on proposed S106 application. Cllr Mahy and Button to draft and take parishioner comments into consideration.

128.2 Access to Ashwell station includes the cycle/footway route and car parking. To note any update. See attached Q&A notes.

128.3 To receive update - Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group. (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). Working Group to discuss 2nd stage of review of potential schemes for delivering reduction in carbon.

129 **Trees and Hedges (Cllr Sims) – To note any updates** – One or two Beech Trees have been donated to the Parish Council and will be planted at the Rec along the section towards the gate opposite the cemetery.

130 **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.

131 **Current Applications:** any updates:

131.1 **24/01444/FP:** Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House 5 High Street Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing), (Hunts Close). Site has been marketed and sales process ongoing.

131.2 **25/02571/OP** Growing Baldock – No updates.

132 [Planning Summary](#)

133 **Footpath at Townsend Meadow** – No updates.

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

134.1 **26/00045/TCA** : T1: Lilac - Coppice at the height of the wall. T2: Plum - Pollard at a 4m to a framework and remove the stem at the back, pushing on the fence. T3: Lilac - Remove the stems of the plum growing from the root system growing in front of the Lilac. Cut back or remove the branches growing into the fence to give up to 30 cm clearance. T4: Self Set Plum - Cut to ground level and eco plug. T5. Holly - Hedge cut all around and being heavier at the top to round off and start to train into a dome/ball. Prune back the branches from the adjacent Apple to give clearance if required : 40 High Street, Ashwell. Cllrs had no comment or reasons to object.

134.2 **26/00202/TCA** : T023: Reduce north limb by 50%. War Memorial, Lucas Lane. Cllrs had no comment or reasons to object.

134.3 **26/00203/TCA** : T667: Holm Oak - Reduce the southwest side of the tree by 3m. T688: Holm Oak. Reduce branches to provide a 3m clearance from the property. Ashwell Cemetery. Cllrs had no comment or reasons to object.

134.4 **26/00204/TCA** : T00387, T00388 Holm Oaks – prune to provide clearance from the overhead phone lines St Marys Church, Ashwell. Cllrs had no comment or reasons to object.

135 [Tree Planning Summary](#)

136 **Reports from Committees**

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

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

137.1 The Springs Report from Cllr Hoffman. Work undertaken at the Springs to remove Sycamores. Consultation will proceed with experts to provide advice on appropriate plants to replace Sycamores. Consultation will include Natural England regarding species, numbers etc. Final proposals to be put to the Parish Council for consideration.

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

137.3 Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets. To receive any updates from [**Pavilion Working Party**](#) – click link for notes.

137.4 Small Gains and Track – To note any updates from Cllr Lee. Continuing dialogue with Chairman of ACCIES on agreement for use of Small Gains Playing Field and track management.

137.5 Cemetery – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy. Potential date 28th February for tidy up at cemetery.

137.6 Street furniture - To note any updates Cllr Mahy. Nothing to report.

138 Finance and Governance

138.1 **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.

138.2 **Budget 2025/26 Update** – To note any updates.

138.2.1 To receive an oral update on proposed licence agreement. Still with the Chairman of the ACCIES.

138.3 **Post Office** – to [**propose payment to support the Post Office**](#) for the Year 2025/26. Proposal to grant £700 from S137. Proposed by Cllr Lee, seconded by Cllr Mahy. All in favour. Cllr Lee to advise PCC.

Action: Cllr Lee

138.4 **Annual Audit 2023/24 & 2024/25** – To note any updates.

138.4.1 Annual Audit for the 2023/24 financial year. Still outstanding

138.4.2 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. Still outstanding

Date of next meeting : 4th March 2026 at 7pm in the Parish Room, and Parish Meeting to be held on 18th March 2026 in the School Hall at 7pm.

Meeting closed at 9.02pm