

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting held on  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in the Parish Room**

**Present:** Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, Bridget Macey, David Short, David Sims.  
The Clerk was also in attendance.  
Members of the public: Seven parishioners.

**80. Apologies for absence** Cllr Martin Hoffman (unexpected family commitment).

**81. Minutes of previous meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016.**

It was *resolved* that these be approved and signed.

**Clerk**

The draft minutes of the Joint Committee meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 were noted.

**82. Matters of general report from previous meetings**

**82.1** (November Council, 69.1) 1<sup>st</sup> Ashwell Scout Group fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD). It was noted that refurbishment, including repainting, signage and installation of the PAD were pending. It was understood that public training sessions would be made available; the supplier encouraged as many as possible to participate in these.

**82.2** (November Council, 69.2) Superfast broadband. It was noted that no further confirmed information had been received.

**82.3** (November Council, 75.2.1) Govia/Thameslink/Great Northern rail services consultation. Further correspondence from parishioners and the leaflet drop to all households by the Baldock campaign group were noted. Parishioner Joan Ridley was thanked for reviewing the documents available and responding. See also HCC transport strategy consultation 84.2.2 below.

**82.4** Post office services in the Parish Room. The recent forced temporary closure due to faulty equipment and failure of the Post Office Ltd engineer to provide an adequate response was noted. It was agreed that the adverse impact on the local business supplying the service and on service users was unacceptable; five other villages had also been affected. It was understood that inadequate investment by Post Office Ltd to support outreach services in rural communities was the cause. This was a separate issue to the recent country-wide hacking problems reported in the national press.

It was resolved to write to Ofcom with copies to Post Office Ltd and Sir Oliver Heald, MP.

**Clerk**

**83. Parish management reports** (current responsibilities shown in brackets)

*(Routine matters concerning the management of parish assets and amenities are usually not discussed or reported to full council meetings; some are dealt with by the Management Committee, others directly by parish councillors and/or the Clerk)*

(Draft minutes of last Management/Finance Committee Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 available)

**83.1 Cemetery** (Cllr Madeleine Legg)

Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the Chapel of Rest tenancy had been sent by the solicitor to Nevilles. The solicitor had requested the deeds of the Cemetery to progress Land Registry requirements; these would be supplied.

**83.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion** (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg)

Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg reported on the User Group meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

Progress with plans to enhance the public toilets had been applauded.

The proposals to upgrade the pavilion were also discussed. The Cricket Club shared its latest views including their proposals to open up the roof space and to extend the frontage with new doors, both of which they felt would improve the space. Parish councillors expressed some reservations about the robustness of the original wooden structure, the extent of the plumbing, electrical works etc in the roof space and the cost of the proposals. They agreed to seek expert advice.

Installation of the replacement storage container behind the pavilion was scheduled.

The Chairman reported further concerns in relation to the bar operated by the Cricket Club in the pavilion. Despite warnings on several previous occasions a quantity of alcohol had again been left on the premises. Directives that this was not allowed had clearly been given and, as had been warned, he had removed it. It was agreed that it be disposed of with anything of value being donated to a suitable local charity function. There had also been complaints from other users that the premises had been left in a very poor state with drinks spillages, unwashed glasses and general untidiness.

It was agreed that the Cricket Club be informed in writing. They would also be warned that the Parish Council would review their use of the premises before the next cricket season and that their actions might well have implications on the license under which their bar operated. **Clerk**

See also 86.1 below re upgrade project/proposals for bid to NHDC.

**83.3 Playground** (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Nothing to report.

**83.4 Public toilets at the pavilion** (Cllr Madeleine Legg) It was noted that the vandalised toilet roll holder had been repaired by the handyman.

See also item 86.1 below re enhancement project/claim to NHDC from planning obligations.

**83.5 The Springs** (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**83.6 Small Gains** (Allotments, Accies sports field and shared car parking area) (Cllr David Sims)

Cllr David Sims reported that the new car park surfacing was settling in well and the grass was growing through it; he had now re-opened some 50% of the area. Minor maintenance tasks by allotment tenants, including himself, was ongoing.

**83.7 Miscellaneous amenities**

(The Lock Up - Cllr David Short. Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond - Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**83.8 Street furniture** (Cllr Bridget Macey) Nothing to report.

**83.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance** (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**83.10 Parish Clock** (Cllr Mark White) The Chairman reported that delivery of the new motor was still pending. Due to the age of the clock this had to be sourced from a specialist supplier.

**83.11 War Memorial** Cllr Short reported that following concerns re pigeon droppings, he had made a site visit and found that the ledge on the stonework had already been cleaned up. Whoever was responsible was thanked.

## **84. Items re other authorities**

### **84.1 Herts Highways**

**84.1.1** Cllr David Sims reported that a meeting with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer was scheduled for Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December. Updates would be requested on items pending and agreed additional items proposed.

It was noted that the Speed Indicator Device (SID) had been installed in Station Road, the footway at the end of Small Gains Lane resurfaced and the verge protection bollards installed outside the Cemetery.

Items to be chased up included (i) the SID for Newnham Way, (ii) Station Road safety improvements, (iii) A505 Odsey junction safety improvements, (iv) LED street-lighting, (v) yellow lines, (vi) overgrown verges, (vii) drainage problems.

See [www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets](http://www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets) (County Councillor Tony Hunter)

**84.1.2** Information received from the URC was noted. The hall wall on the corner of Silver Street and Kingsland Way had been damaged twice in recent months due to parked vehicles obstructing access. This would be forwarded to County Councillor Tony Hunter in support of the proposal for yellow lines at this location. **Clerk**

### **84.2 Herts County Council**

**84.2.1** (November Council, 71.3.1) 202 Taxibus to the station/concerns that service remains under review.

It was noted that this had been passed on to County Councillor Tony Hunter.

**84.2.2** (October Council, 62.3.1) Transport Vision 2050: Public Consultation on a new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire. It was agreed that a response be made in support of the HCC stated policy and vision for Hertfordshire, 'Prosperity: Less car dependent and more integrated accessible & sustainable transport: Resilient and reliable network.' It was noted that Ashwell & Morden Station was not included in HCC strategy documents as it was located in Cambridgeshire. The equivalent transport strategy documents for Cambridgeshire noted in its '...provision/enhancement on main transport corridors between Cambridge and neighbouring towns' that the station be categorised as an 'improved transport hub'. **Clerk**

See also 82.3 above.

## **85. Planning matters**

*Details of applications are sent from NHDC as the Planning Authority to the Parish Council as a consultee. If any objections are raised either by a parishioner or a parish councillor an on-site meeting of the Parish Council's Planning Committee is convened to consider those items. See the notice board or contact the Clerk for an agenda.*

(Draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November are available)

**85.1. New applications.** Proposals for recommendations to NHDC.

**85.1.1.** NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02504/1HH. 24 Silver Street.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Insertion of two front dormer windows and three rear rooflights to facilitate loft conversion.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Button.

It was noted that no concerns or objections had been received from members of the public. Cllr David Short expressed the view that the housing needs identified by the emerging Neighbourhood Plan were for smaller units and not 6-bedroom houses.

It was **resolved** that a recommendation be made to the Planning Officer to grant approval.

**Clerk**

**85.1.2** NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02821/1HH. 2 Claybush Road.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Canning.

It was noted that no concerns or objections had been received either from parish councillors or members of the public.

It was **resolved** that a recommendation be made to the Planning Officer to grant approval.

**Clerk**

**85.1.3** NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02930/1HH. 26 Hodwell.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension. Two roof lights to the front elevation.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Dellow.

It was noted that no concerns or objections had been received either from parish councillors or members of the public.

It was **resolved** that a recommendation be made to the Planning Officer to grant approval.

**Clerk**

**85.2 Works to Trees in Conservation Area (TCA).** Applications to NHDC reviewed.

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02763/1TCA. Spring House, 7 High Street.

'1 Sycamore tree situated in the front of property to be crown cleaned and the canopy raised. Ash tree within the canopy to be felled. Laurel at rear of property to be reduced to allow more light into garden.'

Applicant: Mrs A Good.

It was noted that there were no objections.

It was **resolved** that this be conveyed to the Planning Officer.

**Clerk**

**85.3 Applications pending NHDC decisions.**

**85.3.1** NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02154/1 J Cooke Engineering, Ashwell Street.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 6 x 4 bedroom dwellings and 1 x 3-bedroom dwelling with detached double garage; associated car parking and ancillary works following the demolition of existing factory building. (Cllr Graham Lee declared an interest as a contiguous neighbour).

Further correspondence with the developer and the NHDC Planning Officer following the Parish Council's requests for minor amendments to the proposals was noted. The Planning Officer had agreed to amendments including additional parking provision, inclusion of a twitchel to enhance pedestrian safety and excavation by 200mm to lower the heights of the new houses and reduce their dominance over existing dwellings. Additional drawings showing comparative levels had been provided by the developer.

Conditions covering various aspects would form part of the permission; the draft of these would be forwarded to the Parish Council prior to the decision being made. Local residents had since requested a further reduction in height of 200mm. It was agreed that the Parish Council's response sent to NHDC on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016 following the site meeting should be confirmed. It was, however, agreed to convey to the Planning Officer that any further reduction in the heights would be appreciated by local residents. **Clerk**

**85.3.2** NHDC Case Ref No: 16/01797/1 Land rear of 4-14, Claybush Road.

Full Planning Permission: 33 dwellings together with associated access, parking, amenity and open space.

It was noted that information had been received that this application was pending further progress of the Local Plan/submission to the national inspector by NHDC.

See also 85.8 below re the draft Local Plan public consultation.

#### **85.4 NHDC decisions on applications.**

The following were noted; all decisions consistent with the Parish Council's recommendations.

##### **85.4.1 NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02582/1HH. 1 John Sale Close**

Full Planning Permission Householder: Replacement windows and doors.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

##### **85.4.2 NHDC Case Ref 16/02470/1HH. 32 West End.**

Full Planning Permission Householder: Single storey side extension.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

##### **85.4.3 NHDC Case Ref 16/02510/1HH. 108 Station Road.**

Full Planning Permission Householder: First floor front extension.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

##### **85.5 NHDC Application No: 16/01345/1. 68 High Street.**

NHDC Approved Discharge of Condition. Condition 3 -Written scheme of Investigation

The following from the report was noted,

'The archaeological work required shall comprise a detailed description and analysis record of the building prior to the alteration of the building to HE Level 3. It will be carried out in two stages ie before any works and after strip out. The Watching Brief will be carried out after the rear building has been demolished.'

##### **85.6 NHDC Case Ref 16/02236/1. Land rear of 22 High Street.**

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 1x3 bedroom dwelling and creation of vehicular access off of Hodwell.

It was noted that the application had been withdrawn.

##### **85.7 Pre-Application Advice: Residential Development**

Land Off Station Road, Station Road, Ashwell - Case Ref No: 16/02826/1PRE.

It was noted that letters had been received from a planning agent, JWPC, acting on behalf of Beck Developments, and, subsequently, from the NHDC Planning Officer. The latter had indicated that in this instance, as the developer had already approached the Parish Council directly for its comments he would, '...take the unusual step of consulting you on the pre-app...'; any comments from the Parish Council should be forwarded to him by 12<sup>th</sup> December.

It was noted that an acknowledgment had been emailed to the planning agent. It had been noted that;

- (i) Any comments made by the Parish Council at this pre-application stage would be of a general nature in order not to compromise its position when responding to any future planning application,
- (ii) Prior to forming any detailed response on a planning application parish councillors would wish to listen to any comments from parishioners,
- (iii) The Parish Council would be supportive of any pre-application publicity by the developer to parishioners in order that all were fully aware of the proposals being made. It was understood that the developer was minded to prepare a leaflet to be sent to all households and possibly to hold an exhibition in the village.

*Standing Orders suspended for members of the public present to contribute.*

Parishioners expressed concerns that additional housing would exacerbate existing problems with, (i) traffic, (ii) parking, particularly outside retail premises where this was already adversely impacting local businesses, (iii) access to services at the doctors' surgery, (iv) the sewerage system.

*Standing Orders reinstated.*

Cllr David Short proposed that the Parish Council's response at this pre-application stage be based on the criteria currently being established as part of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. With regard to future residential development this would cite the results of the recent housing survey that had identified the need for smaller units and suitably located provision for the elderly. The density of any development should be consistent with the Ashwell Village Design Statement. Any significant development would be subject to a section 106 agreement/planning obligation. This would be expected to include contributions for sustainable transport and highway safety (eg access to the station) and sports facilities (additional pitches and associated facilities).

It was agreed that a response be made to the Planning Officer based on the draft prepared by Cllr Short and other members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party.

**Clerk**

##### **85.8 District Local Plan 2011-31**

**85.8.1** (September Council. 54.4.1) Letter sent (1<sup>st</sup> September 2016) to Mr David Scholes, CEO, expressing concerns at the decision to progress the draft Local Plan 2011-31 without amendment. It was noted that the letter had been acknowledged and a detailed response promised; this was still pending.

It was noted that a key objection included in the Parish Council's response to the Local Plan consultation had been the lack of response from NHDC to the Parish Council's proposals made as part of its emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The view was expressed that this latest lack of response compounded the objection.

It was agreed that this issue be communicated to the National Inspector, District Councillor Janine Paterson and Sir Oliver Heald, MP.

**Clerk**

**85.8.2** Public consultation. (November Council, 72.3)

The following were noted;

- (i) A comprehensive response had been submitted by the Parish Council,
- (ii) Publicity including details of the consultation and a draft of the Parish Council's response had been delivered to all households prior to the deadline in the form of a leaflet,
- (iii) A number of parishioners had contacted the Parish Council for further information,
- (iv) A number of parishioners had commended the Parish Council on the above.

It was noted that the Parish Council had requested to speak if an opportunity for this was made available by the National Inspector. It was agreed that clarification be sought on several aspects, including timings, of the process.

**Clerk**

## **86. Reports re Finance matters**

**86.1** (November Council, 73.1) Section 106 claims and grant proposals to NHDC.

**86.1.1** Public toilets/proposals for enhancement of the facilities at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that plans were now in place and the claim from planning obligations/section 106 funds held by NHDC would be progressed.

**Clerk/MFL**

**86.1.2** Pavilion Upgrade/bid to the new Communities Fund. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that progress with the bid would be progressed pending the further advice requested (see 83.2 above).

**Clerk/MFL**

**86.2** The draft Financial Report for the 2017 Yearbook was approved. Re the proposed budget for 2017-18 this would include;

'Notable increases compared to the previous year's expenditure will include, (i) £3,875 to employ an assistant to the Parish Clerk, (ii) a one-off cost of £3,500 to set up an office for the Parish Council, (iii) £1,200 in additional office running costs (rent and utilities), (iv) £2,750 additional costs at the Cemetery (new boundary fencing, increased maintenance costs), (v) a one-off cost of £5,000 for repairs to the Parish Clock, (vi) £1,250 increased grounds maintenance costs (sports pitches and general grounds maintenance at the Recreation Ground, mowing/tree work etc at the Cemetery, St Mary's Churchyard, the Springs, etc), (vii) £1,000 added to sums already set aside for a new website. Notable savings have been made on the cost of insurance due to the broker negotiating with a new supplier. Charges made to the users of the sports facilities and fees for the Cemetery have been raised by some 5% to reflect the increased maintenance costs.

To fund these the precept for 2017-18 has been increased to £67,000, up from £54,500 last year. This has meant that for a Band D household the parish tax for the year has increased from £64.26 to £77.58.'

**86.3** Budget.

**86.3.1** The review and updates following the Joint Finance and Management Committee on 23rd November were noted including, (i) Budget tracking 2016-17, (ii) Allocated reserves, (iii) Budget 2017-18 proposals.

**86.3.2** A proposal was made to approve the committee proposals for the budget for 2017-18.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**86.3.3** A proposal was made to approve the committee proposals to set the Parish Precept for 2017-18 at £67,000.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**86.4** Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

It was *resolved* that these be approved and paid (see Appendix 2).

**Clerk**

## **87. To receive any reports from working groups**

**87.1** Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short). Cllr David Short reported that the next survey would commence at the beginning of January.

It was noted that information had been received from HAPTC on the new Neighbourhood Planning Bill currently going through parliament.

**87.2** Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that comparative information, including costings, had been collated from three possible suppliers for the new website; details had been distributed to parish councillors.

He proposed that the new site be progressed with the supplier considered to be able to provide the best options in terms of the criteria set; the costs were within the budget.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**87.3** Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) See also 86.2 above. Cllr David Short reported that plans for the 2017 edition were progressing well. There were some concerns over the number of adverts received to date; it was noted that funds to support the publication were in the allocated reserve if needed.

## **88. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM**

### ***Standing Orders suspended for this item***

**88.1** Police matters. Cllr Bridget Macey reported on the recent Neighbourhood Watch consultation. Residents had been requested to give their views on issues they considered to be of importance to them to inform the police when setting their priorities.

Information received from PCSO Chris Brabrook re future plans to promote the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and crime prevention was noted.

**88.2** Ashwell 1100 celebrations. Cllr David Short reported that a street party was planned for 9<sup>th</sup> July that would involve closure of the High Street from the URC to the Rose & Crown. Parish councillors were supportive and raised no objections. Cllr Short made a proposal that the Parish Council consider a way of marking the occasion through a material item; the seat on Carters Pond had been commissioned on a previous occasion.

**88.3** School. Cllr David Short reported that the new MUGA had been formally opened by Mr Peter Magill, the Chairman of the Charities Committee of the Merchant Taylors' Company the trustees of the Henry Colbron Trust. It was understood that he and his wife had thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

**88.4** Problems with sewers/drains. Cllr Legg wished it to be publicised to parishioners that the Parish Council kept a register of problems it was made aware of. This was used to inform any need to take up particular issues with the relevant authorities.

**88.5** (August Council, 47.1) It was noted that an update had been received from the Mordens Community First Response group following their presentation to the August Council meeting.

**88.6** Items raised by parishioners.

(i) District Local Plan consultation. See 85.8 above.

(ii) Pre-application: Land off Station Road. See 85.7 above.

(iii) The Parish Council was commended on the recent cleaning of the War Memorial by a specialist supplier.

## **Item 89. Meeting closed to the public at 9.30pm for an *in camera* item**

*Standing Order item 62. That in view of the special nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.*

To be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that included personnel matters.

## **Meeting closed at 9.40pm**

### **Forthcoming meeting dates:**

**Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January.**

**The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

## **Appendix 1 – General material received**

### **Items routinely forwarded to parish councillors by email**

- North Herts District Council -weekly 'Members Information'
- HAPTC -Briefings and Bulletins.
- SLCC -updates and newsletters.



<i>Chairman's Signature.....Date.....</i>
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