

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting held on
Wednesday 4th January 2017 in the Parish Room**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman), Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, Bridget Macey, David Short.

The Clerk was also in attendance.

Members of the public: Six parishioners.

90. Apologies for absence Cllr David Sims (unwell).

91. Minutes of previous meeting held on 7th December 2016.

Cllr Martin Hoffman requested an amendment to 83.2 to clarify that it was the Parish Council that would seek expert advice on their concerns re the Cricket Club's proposals for the pavilion upgrade and not the Cricket Club; this was agreed. **Clerk**

He also raised concerns re 85.7, the objections raised by parishioners in relation to planning matters. It was agreed that the minute was a correct record of the meeting but in future parish councillors should give additional clarification at the time so that it could be recorded and any misunderstandings addressed.

See 95.5.2 below for details.

It was *resolved* that the minutes be approved and signed. **Clerk**

92. Matters of general report from previous meetings

92.1 (December Council, 82.1) 1st Ashwell Scout Group fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD). It was noted that refurbishment, including repainting, signage and installation of the PAD was pending. It was understood that paint supplies were to be obtained by the Scouts; the Parish Council's handyman would then do the painting. It was agreed that clarification be sought. **MNW**

92.2 (December Council, 82.2) Superfast broadband. It was noted that BT works were still being undertaken in the village. Following further enquiries to BT they had reiterated that 'speeds of up to 19mbps were available'. It was agreed that this was rarely, and for some never, available.

92.3 (December Council, 82.3) Govia/Thameslink/Great Northern rail services consultation. It was noted that a response had been sent in support of maintaining a good service for Ashwell rail users.

See also 94.2.

92.4 (December Council, 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 attend. It was noted that Sir Oliver Heald, MP, had responded that he had requested information from relevant sources and would keep the Parish Council informed.

93. 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 23rd November 2016 available)

93.1 Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Chapel of Rest tenancy. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had delivered the deeds to the solicitor. Correspondence between the Parish Council's and Nevilles' solicitors was ongoing.

93.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that a letter had been sent to User group representatives to keep them informed on various matters. The old green store had been removed by local volunteers; the delivery date for the replacement was to be confirmed this week.

See also 96.1 below re upgrade project/proposals for bid to NHDC.

93.3 Playground (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Nothing to report.

93.4 Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the handyman had carried out some remedial work to the internal doors; these were increasingly a problem due to the damp.

See also 96.1 below re enhancement project/claim to NHDC from planning obligations.

93.5 The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that plans for the new trade waste bin to address the increasing amount of litter had been progressed; the store was in situ and the bin due for delivery from NHDC by the end of next week.

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

It was noted that concerns had been raised by parishioners that contractors associated with the planning pre-application on adjacent land had been using the car park allocated for the allotments and football field. Parish councillors had requested that they park on their own land.

It was noted that the protective netting between the football field and the allotments had again been damaged; Cllr David Sims had again carried out repairs.

93.7 Miscellaneous amenities

(The Lock Up - Cllr David Short. Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond - Cllr Martin Hoffman)

Nothing to report.

93.8 Street furniture (Cllr Bridget Macey) Nothing to report.

93.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that information following the survey of the Mill Street wall commissioned by the Parochial Church Council was still pending.

93.10 Parish Clock (Cllr Mark White) The Chairman, Cllr Mark White, reported that the supplier, Wayne Francis of Clock Restorations, was still awaiting delivery of the new motor; it would be installed as soon as it was available. He stressed that sourcing items for a clock of this age was not easy and the part was coming from a French company; they had warned that delivery would take several months. When next on site, Wayne Francis was also to carry out a survey and provide a quotation for works to the worn cams. This work would address the problem of some of the notes in the chimes sometimes not ringing consistently when the overnight sound reduction mechanism was in operation.

94. Items re other authorities

94.1 Herts Highways

94.1.1 Updates following the meeting on 8th December with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer were noted.

See www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets (County Councillor Tony Hunter)

These included (i) the Speed Indicator Device (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.

Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his concerns at the number of outstanding items. It was noted that the requests for the installation of yellow lines at several locations submitted some months previously had been reiterated. It was noted that residents of Colbron Close had also independently lobbied County Councillor Tony Hunter and Herts Highways for yellow lines at the junction of Colbron Close and West End.

Cllr David Short requested clarification on the safety improvements proposed for Station Road. The Parish Council had requested, (i) a SID, now installed, (ii) works at the junction with Small Gains Lane, now resurfaced, (iii) additional pavements on either side of the junction with Ashwell Street to join up those existing, (iv) a crossing table at the junction with Ashwell Street, and (v) extension of the pavement on the corner with Lucas Lane to widen it and slow turning traffic. Cllr David Short expressed the view that now there was a SID at the end of Station Road the chicane should be removed on the grounds that it was ugly. Other parish councillors did not share his view. It was felt that the chicane performed a needed safety function to slow traffic coming into the village; the SID was a good addition to this.

Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his concerns re pedestrian safety at West End. Sections of the footway were very narrow and several incidents of pedestrians being struck by overhanging wing mirrors had been reported. The danger to pedestrians had increased considerably with the increase in the size of wing mirrors on many vehicles. It was agreed that regular attention to ensure that the footway was not narrowed by overhanging vegetation would help in the section running up towards Newnham Way. However, in the section on the tight corner where the road narrowed opposite the high wall only significant cutting back into the bank to widen the footway would address the problem. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported his intention to take the matter up with County Councillor Tony Hunter.

94.2 Herts County Council

94.2.1 (December Council, 84.2.1) 202 Taxibus to the station/concerns that service remains under review. It was noted that a response was pending from County Councillor Tony Hunter.

94.2.2 (December Council, 84.2.2) Transport Vision 2050: Public Consultation on a new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire. It was noted that a response had been sent. This had reiterated the need, consistent

with the County Council's stated strategy, for good transport links for rural communities such as Ashwell. It had also emphasized the importance of Ashwell & Morden Station located in Cambridgeshire.

See also 92.3 above.

94.3 Herts County Council/Rights of Way

94.3.1 Surface repairs to the shire baulk to the rear of Sunnymead Orchard Park (Cambridgeshire Byway 51). Correspondence between the Cambridgeshire Rights of Way Officer, NHDC and others was noted. Cllr Bridget Macey had approached the developer of the adjacent new homes site but they had declined to contribute. Co-operation between authorities had been good and part of the particularly problematic section had been resurfaced.

94.4 North Herts District Council

94.4.1 NHDC Members Information dated 23rd December 2016. A reference to the possible change of Area Committees to 'a more informal alternative' as a cost saving exercise was noted. It was agreed to request further information from NHDC. **Clerk**

95. 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 6th November are available)

95.1. New applications. None received.

95.2 Works to Trees in Conservation Area (TCA)

95.2.1 NHDC Case Ref 16/03195/1TCA. Wolverley House.

Remove dead branches and stubs to clean out crown of 1 Cherry tree; Remove epicormic/basal growth and lift crown by 2.5 m of 1 Lime tree; Reduce crown by up to 3m of 1 Walnut tree.

95.3 Applications pending NHDC decisions

95.3.1 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.

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 Parish Council's request for a new twitchel to provide safer access for pedestrians and facilitate access to the school and village centre for wheelchair users and prams/buggies was noted. The Planning Officer had informed that the Highways Officer had refused the request on the basis that removal of a very significant amount of vegetation would be required to meet the required sight-lines. Parish councillors expressed regret at this decision that would mean only the existing access with very poor sight-lines would be available for the seven new homes on the site.

95.3.2 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 95.6 below re the draft Local Plan public consultation.

95.4 NHDC decisions on applications

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

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.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

Case Ref 16/02502/1HH. 40 High Street.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Creation of new vehicular access from Church Street to provide two parking bays. *(NB should read Church Lane)*

Applicant: Mrs Phillida Shaw.

NHDC decision: Conditional Permission.

95.5 (December Council, 85.7) Pre-Application Advice: Residential Development
Land Off Station Road, Station Road, Ashwell - Case Ref No: 16/02826/1PRE

95.5.1 It was noted that a response had been sent to the NHDC Planning Officer following his request for comments ('I will take the unusual step of consulting...'). This had been based on the preliminary information sent by the developer's agent.

It was noted that the developer had publicised their proposals in the form of a leaflet drop to households and panels displayed in the Parish Room. It was noted that not all households had received the leaflet. It was noted that publicity by the developer had been encouraged by the Parish Council to ensure that parishioners were informed; the Parish Council wished to listen to parishioners' views before making any further comments.

It was noted that the NHDC Planning Officer had sent his pre-application report to the developer. He had been happy for the Parish Council to see this if approval was forthcoming from the developer. This had not been the case, ie the Parish Council had not, as yet, been made aware of the NHDC Planning Officer's pre-application comments. It was understood that the developer had wished to clarify certain points with the NHDC Planning Officer and that this was scheduled for a meeting on 11th January. The developer had requested a meeting with the Parish Council immediately following their meeting with the NHDC Planning Officer.

Following discussion it was proposed that the Parish Council would decline the offer of a meeting with the developer on 11th January. The Parish Council had made its pre-application comments on the current proposals from the developer. It had also said that it wished to listen to the views of parishioners; it was felt that sufficient time had not yet been given for this. It was agreed to request that the developer supply in detail the comments made to them by parishioners following their publicity.

It was **resolved** that the proposal be accepted.

Clerk

95.5.2 Parishioners concerns re infrastructure and services. See also 91 above.

Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his concerns that recording of these in the minutes without clarification was amplifying misinformation. Objections based on infrastructure and service delivery problems such as doctors, sewerage etc carried very little weight when planning officers considered planning applications. Provision of infrastructure and services was a statutory requirement of the relevant authorities; adequate provision for the number of households and the size of the population was their responsibility. Above a certain number of dwellings (ten in a rural area) developers were required to contribute to the costs of this through the systems of Planning Obligations/Community Infrastructure Levy/Section 106 agreements.

Whilst acknowledging that these might be genuine concerns the Parish Council should continue to inform parishioners not to base their objections to planning applications on these.

It was agreed that full clarification should be given whenever such concerns were expressed in relation to planning applications and that this should be recorded in the minutes.

Clerk

95.6 District Local Plan 2011-31

95.6.1 (December Council. 85.8.1) It was noted that receipt had been acknowledged, but a full response was still pending, to the letter sent to Mr David Scholes, CEO NHDC, on 1st September, expressing concerns at the decision to progress the draft Local Plan 2011-31 without amendment. Further enquiries had been made to determine the reason for this. It was agreed that the matter be pursued once further information was available.

Clerk

95.6.2 (December Council, 85.8.2) Submission by NHDC to the National Inspector following the public consultation. It was noted that information had been sought on the procedures and timings for the submission and its consideration by the National Inspector including the opportunity for a representative to speak on behalf of the Parish Council.

Clerk

96. Reports re Finance matters

96.1 (December Council, 86.1) Section 106 claims and grant proposals to NHDC.

96.1.1 Public toilets/proposals for enhancement of the facilities at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that plans and costings had been progressed. The required information would now be submitted to NHDC with a formal request to release the planning obligations/section 106 funds held.

96.1.2 Pavilion Upgrade/bid to the new Communities Fund. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that plans and costings had been progressed. The required forms would now be completed and submitted to NHDC.

96.2 Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

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

Clerk

97. Reports from working groups

97.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the next parish-wide survey covering matters other than housing was due for publication this month. The next group meeting was scheduled for 10th January.

97.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that development of the new site was being progressed by himself and the Clerk. The initial payment to the supplier was in this month’s accounts. He had set a target date for the new site to go live.

97.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the 2017 edition was on target for publication in early March.

98. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM

Standing Orders suspended for this item taken at 8.30pm

98.1 School Governing Body. Cllr David Short (school governor) reported that the new head was now in position.

98.2 Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman (Chairman of the trustees in his own right) reported that the current works to the wall were going well.

98.3 Moss Cottages. Cllr Madeleine Legg (Parish Council nominated trustee) reported that a new Clerk, Mrs Rosemary Pearch, had been appointed.

98.4 Village Hall. The Chairman reported that he would attend the meeting scheduled for next week.

98.5 Ashwell 1100 celebrations. Cllr David Short (member of the organising group in his own right) reported that a tree planting had been proposed; the current plan was for a Mulberry in the grounds of the Doctor’s Surgery.

98.6 Village litter pick event. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the Clean for the Queen event (C4Q) last year had been very successful and details had now been received for the Great British Spring Clean in March. It was noted that the C4Q organisers were unable to take on responsibility again this year and that parish councillors were already overstretched. It was agreed to publicise the event in the Ashwell Village News with a plea for others to come forward. It was noted that joining up with such nationally organised events overcame the issues of health and safety that were a very significant barrier to the Parish Council running its own events. It also meant that practical input from national bodies and local authorities was made available.

The view was expressed that ‘one week was not enough’ and noted that many parishioners acted as good citizens throughout the year by picking up litter and making a personal effort for the good of the community. It was agreed that they should be applauded for this.

98.7 Dog fouling. Cllr Bridget Macey reported further complaints from parishioners. All were encouraged to report incidents to NHDC; their Enforcement Officer had posted penalty warning notices at key locations.

98.8 Items raised by parishioners.

98.8.1 Parking on the verges adjacent to the station. A parishioner proposed that to overcome the unsightly damage done to the verges by parked cars the Ashwell & Morden Station should be closed. He proposed that the railway authority be requested to cease services and that anyone wishing to catch a train should go to another station. Parish councillors expressed their surprise and were not in agreement. It was suggested that the matter be raised at the Annual Parish Meeting so the views of others could be ascertained.

98.8.2 Skid danger caused by debris and leaf litter on road surfaces. A parishioner reported an incident of a vehicle skidding on debris/leaf litter on the steeply banked section of top Bear Lane. It was felt that this was particularly dangerous to pedestrians given that this was a shared road surface. He questioned why this, and other roads in the village, had not been swept by the NHDC contractor. It was noted that parishioners were encouraged to report such matters to the appropriate authority; contact details were available in the Yearbook and on the ‘green cards’ issued by the Parish Council.

98.8.3 Poor state of streets in the centre of the village. Two parishioners raised their concerns at the poor state of the footways in the centre of the village due to litter and fallen leaves. They questioned whether the Parish Council still employed an operative to sweep them. They expressed the view that in the past when a now-retired parishioner had been employed by the Parish Council the area had never looked so neglected.

Items 99 and 100. Meeting closed to the public at 9.00pm for two *in camera* items

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 9.15pm

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 1st February.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th 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.
- Police OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins.

Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -January 2017			4th January 2017			
			Declarations: None			
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman (ii) Cllr Short						
			£	£	£	
Receipts			Precept	Grants	Other	
					Total	
59	Dignity Funerals Ltd	Crouch burial (cemetery works 16.24, 16.26, 16.27)			600.00	600.00
60	Santander	bank interest			2.66	2.66
61	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent			68.75	68.75
62	Groundwork Herts	P3 grant/footpath leaflet reprint		319.17		319.17
Total			0.00	319.17	671.41	990.58
			Admin, office costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
Payments						
By Direct Debit						
190	E.ON (29/12/16)	toilets electricity		13.46	0.67	14.13
191	E.ON (30/10/16)	pavilion electricity		35.09	1.75	36.84
192	E.ON (03/01/17)	chapel electricity		11.00		11.00
By Cheque						
193	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1162.39			1162.39
194	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account,	clerk's pension	402.70			402.70
195	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing*		370.18		370.18
196	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec		73.20		73.20
197	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue		50.20		50.20
198	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00		30.00
199	The Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (31/10-27/11)		128.00	25.60	153.60
200	Martin Sheds	dustbin shed for the Springs		150.00		150.00
201	Vision ICT Ltd	Initial payment new website		795.50	159.10	954.60
202	The Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (05/12-01/01)		128.00	25.60	153.60
Total			1565.09	1725.08	210.30	3,500.47
Outstanding Accounts						
Yearbook 2016 adverts (x1)					65.00	
Total						65.00
Money at bank						
Current Account			03 January 2017		38,461.67	
Deposit Account			03 December 2016		30,445.80	
Total						68,907.47
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after						6,600.00
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding						838.98
Total						74,668.49
Total after paying this months cheques						71,168.02
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques						40,722.22

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