

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

Present:

Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman), Graham Lee, David Sims.
The Clerk (Jane Porter) and Deputy Clerk (Annie Clifford) were also in attendance.
Members of the public: Two parishioners and County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

52. Apologies for absence Cllrs Madeleine Legg (away), Bridget Macey (unwell), David Short (away).

53. Minutes of previous meetings

Proposal for approval and signature of the minutes of the Council meeting 6th September 2017.

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

Clerk

54. Matters of general report from previous meetings

54.1 (September Council, 45.1) 1st Ashwell Scout Group project for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD).

The Chairman reported that he had attended a briefing meeting organised by the Scouts and had volunteered to act as the Parish Council's representative; this would involve undertaking the regular monitoring required. Information had been received from the Community Heartbeat Trust with details of the reporting systems required; it was agreed that this would be undertaken by the Parish Council. Training sessions, although not a prerequisite for use, were to be scheduled by the Scouts. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed his concerns that a security code was required to access the device; this could be obtained by dialling 999 but would inevitably introduce a delay. It was agreed to ensure that local contacts including the shop, pubs, etc, had the security code.

MNW/Deputy Clerk

54.2 (September Council, 45.2) Superfast broadband. No further information had been received following the last update received from Sir Oliver Heald, MP; the suppliers deadline for this area was March 2018.

54.3 (September Council, 45.3) Rear wall of the Rose & Crown in Silver Street. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported his understanding that the brewery had appointed a contractor to repair the wall. As it would be some months before works could be scheduled the NHDC Conservation Officer had agreed that scaffolding to secure the loose brickwork would be installed as soon as possible.

54.4 (September Council, 45.4) Proposals for new entrance signs for the village. Further comments from parish councillors on the design and wording were noted.

54.5 Village Hall (September Council, 51.3) see item 61.9 in Parish Affairs.

55. 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/Deputy Clerk)

55.1 Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg) (i) Chapel of Rest tenancy. A side letter to the lease had been drafted by Nevilles; this was being reviewed. (ii) Ashes area concerns. Notices had been posted with a request for limits on the quantity and type of memorial items placed on and around memorial plaques. Views and comments from family members had also been requested.

55.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg)

The following were noted,

(i) The annual RoSPA report had been received; there were no significant issues, (iii) quotations following the tree survey report were pending, (iii) a quotation for groundworks at the kissing gate on Station Road had been received; it was agreed that another be obtained.

55.3 Playground (Cllr Madeleine Legg). The annual RoSPA report had been received; there were no significant issues and the minor items identified for action would be progressed.

55.4 Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg)

See also 58.1 below re enhancement project/claim to NHDC from planning obligations/section 106.

55.5 The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported.

55.5.1 Some minor tree works were planned for this autumn/winter following the survey report.

55.5.2 Volunteer working party dates had been advertised by the organiser, co-opted member Martin Lush.

55.5.3 The Environment Agency had responded following concerns re low flow rates. They had contacted the relevant agencies and had provided reassurance; the flows at the Springs would continue to be supported in line with legislation to protect the SSSI.

55.5.4 Affinity Water consultation scheduled for early 2018. Expert advice had been taken and responses would be made in advance of the required deadlines.

See also 61.8 below re impact on planned new housing.

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

Cllr David Sims reported that some minor fencing repairs were needed; works would be undertaken by volunteers.

55.7 Misc amenities (To include: The Lock Up, Merchant Taylors' Green, Carters' Pond)

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the tree report for the Walnut on Merchant Taylors Green had been received and no action was required.

55.8 Street furniture (Cllr Bridget Macey)

It was noted that replacement bins for outside the shop and opposite the dentist in the High Street would be installed shortly.

See also 56.3.2 below re the NHDC waste and recycling contract.

55.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman)

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that works identified following the tree survey and report had been agreed with the St Mary's representative. A neighbouring landowner with a large tree overhanging the Churchyard had made a financial contribution to St Mary's that would be used to support the cost. The remainder would be funded by the Parish Council.

55.10 Parish Clock (Cllr Mark White) Nothing to report.

55.11 War Memorial (September Council, 46.11) The Chairman reported that a response had been received from the Ashwell branch of the Royal British Legion following the Parish Council's request for their views re the hedge and fastigate Beech trees. The view expressed was that the hedge should be completely removed and replaced. The two fastigate Beech trees should also be removed completely as they snagged the flag when one was flown from the adjacent flagpole. All works should be completed before the anniversary of the end of WWI, ie November 2018.

Concerns were expressed at the proposal to remove two mature and significant trees. It was agreed that professional advice and a quote for significantly pruning them be obtained.

Clerk

56. Items re other authorities/organisations

56.1 Hertfordshire Highways (September Council, 47.1)

Standing Orders suspended for a report from the County Councillor.

56.1.1 County Councillor Steve Jarvis gave updates on the following,

(i) new signage with lighting had been installed at the A505 Odsey junction, (ii) safety works at the corner of Lucas Lane and Station Road would be funded from his Highways Locality Budget (HLB).

56.1.2 Speed Indicator Device (SID). Proposal for Parish Council match funding to support the costs for HCC to purchase, maintain and insure a second SID. The remainder of the funding would come from County Councillor Steve Jarvis' budgets.

It was **resolved** that part of the costs, £3010, be funded by the Parish Council.

Clerk

The Chairman proposed that County Councillor Steve Jarvis be formally thanked.

Cllr Martin Hoffman requested that the SID at the bottom of Newnham Way be reversed after six months to monitor traffic going out of the village; this was agreed.

56.1.3 Local Transport Plan. County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported his concerns that an area in the north of the county including Ashwell, was not included; he had questioned why.

56.2 Hertfordshire Highways/Rights of Way See 61.4 below.

56.3 North Herts District Council

56.3.1 (September Council, 47.3.1) Cllr Graham Lee gave an update on the proposals for restricted parking spaces outside retail outlets. He had again been in contact with the NHDC Strategic Planning & Projects Manager, Louise Symes. She had informed that there was no funding or personnel available to support any projects in the villages; all resources were concentrated on the towns and matters relating to the new Local Plan. If the Parish Council wished it could lobby the District Councillor responsible or it could progress the project by funding the required Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

It was **resolved** that the NHDC member be lobbied, and the details and costs of the TRO be determined; the matter would then be discussed further.

Clerk

56.3.2 NHDC new contract for waste and recycling, and street cleansing services (public consultation ended 31st August 2017).

It was noted that the NHDC Contracts Manager had informed that the new contract would be agreed in mid-October and full details would then be available. This was confirmed by County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

It was noted that concerns had been raised by Weston, Hinxworth and other parish councils that the proposals for charges to be made for collection of composting waste would lead to an increase in fly-tipping.

See also 57 and 58 below for NHDC matters re Planning and Finance.

57. 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, website or contact the office for the agenda.

57.1 New consultations received from NHDC.

NHDC Case Ref No: 17/02200/1. Land East Of 35, Ashwell Street.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 1 x 2 bed detached single storey dwelling including creation of new vehicular access off of Ashwell Street.

It was noted that a previous application for a large detached house in 2014 had been rejected by the Parish Council and NHDC as being over-dominant.

It was noted that a response from the neighbours at no. 35 had been posted on the NHDC website. They had no objections in principle to development of the site but had made the following requests, (i) retention/addition of vegetation to ensure privacy, (ii) alteration of the position of the new dwelling further away from their boundary, (iii) clarification of trees to be retained, (iv) consideration of wildlife including bats and badgers.

Following discussion it was agreed that the current application had overcome concerns previously expressed.

It was **resolved** to respond to the NHDC Planning Officer with a recommendation that permission be granted.

57.2 Works to Trees in the Conservation Area (TCA) or Tree Protection Orders (TPO).

To following applications made to NHDC were noted.

NHDC Case Ref No 17/02403/1TCA. Dixies Yard, High Street.

T1 Sorbus -crown reduce by up to 1.5m.

NHDC Case Ref No 17/02275/1TCA. 46 Back Street

T1 and T2 conifers -fell to ground level.

57.3 Applications pending NHDC decisions.

It was noted that the next meetings of the NHDC Planning Control Committee were scheduled for Thursday 9th November, 14th December, both at 7.30pm at the Spirella Ballroom, Icknield Way, Letchworth.

57.3.1 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.

Applicant: Croudace Homes.

[Cllr Graham Lee declared an interest as a resident of Ashwell Street]

It was noted that the Planning Officer had informed that determination by the NHDC Planning Control Committee had again been delayed. It was agreed that the draft statement of the Parish Council's objections, and the covering letter to Members, be kept on file until needed.

Further correspondence from local residents re the pedestrian access issues was noted.

57.3.2 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01515/1. 8 Green Lane.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of four bed dwelling with detached double garage/gym/store following demolition of existing dwelling.

No further information.

57.3.3 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01406/1. Land Development Off, Station Road, Ashwell

Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 46 no. dwellings, children's play area, two new sports pitches, pavilion building and associated infrastructure.

No further information.

57.3.4 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01766/1HH. 8 The Rickyard.

Full Permission Householder: Single storey front extension.

No further information.

57.3.5 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/002047/1HH. 6 Fordham Close

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear side extension and garage following demolition of existing conservatory. First floor side extension.

No further information.

57.3.6 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/001807/1HH. Land rear of Townsend House, 24 Lucas Lane

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 4 x 3 bed terraced dwellings with creation of new vehicular access off of Lucas Lane.

It was noted that the NHDC Planning Officer had informed that amendments to the application had been requested; she would re-consult once these were in hand.

57.4 NHDC decisions on applications.

57.4.1 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01634/1. 1 Newnham Way.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 1 x 4 bed detached dwelling including attached double garage following demolition of existing dwelling and garage. Widening of existing vehicular access.

NHDC decision: Conditional permission.

57.4.2 NHDC Case Ref No: 17/001958/1HH. 1 Church Lane

Full Permission Householder: Demolish existing outbuilding, and replace with a single storey building to be used as non-commercial ceramics studio.

NHDC decision: Conditional permission.

57.5 NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02154/1. Cooke Engineering

[Cllr Graham Lee declared an interest as a resident of Ashwell Street]

Concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents were noted. The reduction in site levels requested had only been applied to the two middle houses in the agreed plans. It was noted that the request to the Planning Officer had clearly related to all the houses and not just the middle two. The Parish Council had not been party to subsequent drawings that might have revealed the detail. As the application had been decided under delegated powers by the Planning Officer rather than being 'called in' for determination by the NHDC Planning Control Committee, there had been no further formal opportunity for input by the Parish Council. The NHDC Area Planning Officer had informed that it was not possible to alter the agreed plans.

57.6 District Local Plan 2011-31

The receipt from the National Inspector of the timetable and documents for the Public Examination was noted. Ashwell would be included under 'Matter 11' to be heard in week three on Wednesday 29th November, afternoon session commencing at 2pm.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would exercise its right to be heard/participate in the hearing session.

Clerk

58. Reports re Finance matters

58.1 Planning Contributions/Section 106 claims. It was noted that there had been no further communication from NHDC Community Development Manager, Stuart Izzard, following his submission of the request for public toilets enhancement to the relevant NHDC Planning Officers.

58.2 Pavilion Upgrade. It was noted that collation of costings and supporting evidence for a bid to the NHDC Communities Fund was still pending the availability of resources.

58.3 Audit 2016-17. It was noted that (i) the completed Annual Return had been received from the External Auditor confirming that there were no issues, (ii) the audited accounts had been published by 30th September.

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

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

Clerk

It was noted that the invoice for half of the cost of the new website was still held pending the suppliers fulfilment of the work agreed. See also 60.2 below.

60. To receive any reports from working groups

60.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short, Cllrs Graham Lee and Madeleine Legg)
Cllr Graham Lee reported that a meeting was scheduled.

60.2 Website (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported continuing issues with the new website. There were persistent failings in its operation and parts of the agreed specification had not been completed. He had written to the company owner/director itemising the complaints and had been assured that these would be addressed. It was agreed that the second payment would continue to be held.

60.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short)

It was noted that minutes of the last meeting had been distributed.

60.4 Local business support (leader Cllr Graham Lee) See 56.3.1 above.

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

These items taken at 8.30pm; Standing Orders suspended to allow public participation.

61.1 Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the trustees had commissioned a building survey. This had revealed serious issues that had severe financial implications.

61.2 Local police. Cllr David Sims reported that he had been in contact with the PCSO Chris Brabrook and requested why the police speed checks had ceased. He had been told that reintroduction of the monthly checks would be considered.

61.3 Ashwell Archaeology. Group leader Sarah Talks requested permission to dig a test pit in the Springs; this would be well away from the SSSI towards the Springhead boundary. Cllr Martin Hoffman stated that he could see no objections and proposed that permission be granted. This was agreed.

61.4 Twitchel from Ashwell Street, crossing at Dixies Close, to Back Street. Concerns were expressed by a parishioner that this path was very steep, narrow and not safely accessible by anyone elderly or infirm. It was not wide enough for anyone with a buggy and a child. She requested that suitable warning signage be installed. She expressed a particular concern that the footpath had been proposed by developers for use by residents of the new housing in the area.

It was noted that safety concerns during freezing weather had been raised several times with HCC but installation of a new salt bin to service the path had been refused.

It was noted that this twitchel was a public right of way (no. 9 on the Definitive Statement) and a County Council responsibility. It was agreed to contact the HCC Countryside Access Officer to determine the specification and safety requirements.

Clerk

61.5 Dog fouling. It was reported that, following a request, a parishioner had been supplied with an NHDC notice to put up on her boundary wall.

61.6 Overhanging vegetation. Concerns were again expressed re the corner of Ashwell Street and Claybush Road. It was agreed that a letter again be sent to the residents.

61.7 Parking. Concerns were expressed that vehicles had parked in Station Road between the Cemetery and the Morden's junction by the small chicane.

61.8 Baldock development. County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported that the next stage of publicity was due imminently. Affinity Water had given information, in line with their statutory duties to supply water to the new housing, that it would not be possible to extract any more groundwater and that capacity for new homes would come from water savings, eg installation of meters.

61.9 (August Council, 42.5) Village Hall/letter from the Chairman of the trustees requesting that the Parish Council take over the role of trustee.

[Cllr Martin Hoffman declared an interest as a trustee. It was noted that Cllr Mark White, the Chairman, attended the Management Committee as the Parish Council's representative]

It was noted that comments, expressing both points in favour and against, had been requested from parishioners and parish councillors. Cllr Martin Hoffman expressed the view that the role of the trustees was not onerous and he could envisage no fundamental problems. Currently there were up to four meetings a year, a clerk was employed to handle bookings and the facility was financially sound. If financial support was needed this could be raised through the precept.

It was agreed that views and comments continue to be considered and that a firm response would be given in time for the next Village Hall AGM.

Chairman's Signature.....Date.....

Meeting closed 9.25pm.

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Monthly Council meeting Wednesday 1st November, 8pm in the Parish Room.

Appendix 1 – General material received

- 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 -October 2017			4th October 2017			
Proposed (i) Cllr Lee		(ii) Cllr Hoffman	Declarations: None			
			£	£	£	
			Precept	Grants	Other	
					Total	
69	Dignity Funerals Ltd	Cobbold burial (cemetery works 17.25)			130.00	130.00
70	Rhubarb & Mustard	Yearbook sales			54.00	54.00
71	Dr M G Hoffman	cemetery works 17.28			96.00	96.00
72	Santander	bank interest			2.59	2.59
73	NHDC	precept 2nd installment	33,500.00			33500.00
Total			33500.00	0.00	282.59	33,782.59
Payments			Admin, office costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities	VAT	Total
By Direct Debit						
140	E.ON (27/09/2017)	pavilion electricity		23.05	1.15	24.20
141	E.ON (12/09/2017)	toilets electricity		9.42	0.47	9.89
142	E.ON (01/10/2017)	chapel electricity		11.00		11.00
By cheque						
143	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1181.25			1181.25
144	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account,	clerk's pension	401.57			401.57
145	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	38.38		4.55	42.93
146	Mrs Annie Clifford	Deputy clerk's salary	260.00			260.00
147	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec (inc overtime)		157.40		157.40
148	A Beddall	ECO salary		219.20		219.20
149	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	331.26	72.40		403.66
150	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	100.00			100.00
151	Mr K Clifford	premises duties		105.00		105.00
152	HAPTC	training course deputy clerk	40.00			40.00
153	ESE Direct	x2 office chairs	134.90		26.98	161.88
154	Ashwell Housing Association	Bear Farm office rent Oct-Mar	450.00			450.00
155	Good Directions Ltd	x2 litter bins		1140.00	228.00	1368.00
156	The Play Inspection Company	RoSPA inspections -Rec and Springs		125.00	25.00	150.00
157	Brilliant Lawns (inv4603)	Grasscutting pitches at the Rec		220.00		220.00
158	Brilliant Lawns (inv4602)	Fertilizer to Rec pitches		406.00		406.00
159	D J Granger Grounds Maint. Ltd	grounds maintenance worksheet 15		370.00	74.00	444.00
160	Came & Company	Insurance premium	2320.30			2320.30
161	BDO LLP	Audit fee	300.00		60.00	360.00
162	C E Metcalfe	Public toilets cleaning (September)		188.00		188.00
			5557.66	3003.00	418.53	8,979.19
Outstanding Accounts						
None						
Total						
Money at bank						
Current Account			28 September 2017		56,159.16	
Deposit Account			04 September 2017		30,471.32	
Total						86,630.48
Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after						-
Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding						345.60
Total						86,284.88
Total after paying this months cheques						77,305.69
Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques						46,834.37