

Minutes

of the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1st December 2021

Present: Parish Councillors Gemma Allan, Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman), Martin Hoffman, David Sims and Mark White.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne). District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Five members of the public joined on Zoom.

61. Apologies for absence to be noted and approved. None.

62. Declarations of Interest. None.

63. Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of (i) the Council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd November 2021, (ii) the Joint Finance and Management Committee held on 28th October 2021. This was approved. **Action: Graham/Clerk**

64. OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak.

64.1 Items from members of the public.

Including reports received earlier and matters raised at the meeting.

64.1.1 Yellow lines. A parishioner reported that those recently installed on the corner opposite the Rose & Crown were already showing signs of the paint crumbling. It was agreed that this be brought to the attention of HCC/Highways.

64.1.2 Dixies Meadow. A parishioner requested an update on the proposed sale by the landowner; she was aware that surveyors had been seen on the site. The Chairman reported that he was also aware of this. The Parish Council was continuing to investigate a range of options that might be of benefit to the village. Once fuller details were established these would be communicated and, as promised, full consultation with the wider community undertaken. However, it had to be acknowledged that the Parish Council had no control over the landowner.

64.1.3 War Memorial. An Ashwell Royal British Legion representative notified that the centenary of the memorial would be marked by a rededication ceremony to be held on Saturday 4th December at 2.30 followed by refreshments in the pavilion. All were welcome to attend.

64.1.4 Springs hedge. A local resident requested whether the boundary hedge along Springhead could be reduced in height. It was reported that the usual schedule for cutting was a safety trim to just the roadside in the summer (mindful of the bird-nesting season) and a cut to both sides and the top in January/February. The top was usually cut down to head height.

64.1.5 Co-options to the Parish Council. The Chairman reported that a letter had been received from parishioner David Short noting that he had raised this matter previously and requesting that it be raised again. Whilst he was positive to the effort put in by the current councillors, he felt that with a greater number of people the workload could be spread out and more achieved. Currently there were only six parish councillors out of the full quota of twelve as only six people had stood for election.

The Chairman reported that some years ago the Parish Council had asked NHDC to provide information on the possible reduction of the quota of twelve to maybe eight as this was felt to be more achievable. The process by which this might happen (a community governance review) was, however, long and onerous. District Councillor Tom Tyson reported that he had been in contact with NHDC Electoral Services who had confirmed this. Also, that any agreement by them to progress this was dependent on their resources; this would be difficult at present and, with the forthcoming boundary review, this was unlikely to change in the near future. It was agreed that this should be 'kept on the agenda' for when resources were available.

It was noted that efforts had been made going back many years to encourage people to join the Parish Council. Individuals had been approached and a series of 'workshops' held to determine the views of parishioners. Working groups formed to progress identified topics, such as the recent conservation area review, had been a successful way of involving new people and introducing them to what a parish council did and how it operated. Effort had been made to present the Parish Council as a friendly group of individuals with a relaxed attitude to getting things done.

It was agreed that new faces who could bring their skills and ideas as well as spreading the workload would be encouraged to get involved either in the short term by co-option or at the next scheduled election in May 2023.

64.2 North Herts District Council (NHDC). District Councillor Tom Tyson reported. See also item 66 re Planning.

(i) **Proposed Bygrave solar farm.** No planning application had yet been made to NHDC but one was expected. Bygrave Parish Council had arranged for a public meeting to be held on Tuesday 7th December at Bygrave church. A letter had been sent out by PACE, the solar farm developer, inviting people to their 'Community Consultation'. This would be a drop-in meeting, from 5 pm to 7.15 pm. Ashwell residents would be welcome to attend.

It was agreed that this be publicised on the website.

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/bygrave-parish-meeti/>

(ii) **NHDC Free tree give-away.** Free trees were being offered to local residents. Details of locations where these could be picked up had been put on the Parish Council's website.

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/nhdc-free-trees-offe/>

(iii) **Townsend Meadow**/condition that the developer install a new section of footway, whilst retaining the hedge, prior to the occupation of the properties. He had been in contact with relevant NHDC officers who had informed that, as the matter was 'in hand', no enforcement action was currently planned. County Councillor Steve Jarvis confirmed that the developer was to submit drawings to Herts Highways for their approval prior to a contractor being appointed and works commencing.

(iv) **Lynx bus service.** Extra evening services would operate in the run up to Christmas from 20:30 – 23:00. See the website for details

hertsynxsupport@hertfordshire.gov.uk

County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported that user numbers were pleasing. The proportion of paying passengers vs concessions was higher than for the usual rural services; this implied that the service was attracting different users. Data for Ashwell users showed routes mainly to and from the towns but also some between villages. In response to a question he agreed to provide data re the times of usage.

64.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported. *See also 64.2 (iii) and (iv) above.*

(i) **West End chicane.** Drawings for this were expected and he would pass these on once received.

(ii) **Walking and cycling routes to the station.** The two identified routes, one via Station Road and one using the shire baulk along the boundary with Steeple Morden parish, had now been identified in this joint HCC and NHDC exercise as 'primary routes'. This was a good first step in the long-term aim to improve access to the station. However, both routes included the problematic section in Station Road and were reliant on positive input from Cambridgeshire and the landowner. The efforts of the local parties who had led on this were to be applauded. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported his encouragement as this was a project that he had championed for many years.

64.4 Items from parish councillors (see further below for premises reports)

The Chairman, Graham Lee, reported.

(i) **Greening Ashwell group.** An email had been received from one of the joint chairs giving an update on their activities. The group had liaised with residents of Dixies Close and HCC re the species and locations for the planting of new trees to replace those that had been lost over time. A volunteer working party had carried out works at Chalk Bank Close. A meeting had been agreed with Croudace re possible involvement with areas on the Claybush Hill Meadow development. It was agreed to forward documents included when the planning permission was granted so that compliance could be assured. **Action: Clerk**

(ii) **Ashwell Doctors' Surgery/report** from the Ashwell & Bassingbourn Patients Liaison Group. The general view seemed to be that staffing levels and communications had improved. It was understood that the opportunity for face-to-face appointments at the Ashwell surgery for Ashwell residents was now assured and upgrading of the telephone system was planned.

(iii) **The Pharmacy** was now giving Covid boosters.

(iv) **The Ruddery/Rights of way review.** No further information had been received from the HCC officer; this would be chased up. **Action: Clerk**

(v) **The Village Hall.** The trustees and the user's group had been discussing various options but it was understood that they had yet to agree on a firm proposal that could be put to the Parish Council re its involvement. One option could include the Parish Council having a nominated trustee. As this was different to what had previously been proposed the Village Hall had been requested to put their preferred option in writing once agreed so that the Parish Council could discuss this and formally respond.

64.5 WORKING GROUP REPORTS

(i) Neighbourhood Plan Group, (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). The plan was to be on the agenda of the December NHDC meeting for their approval. Following this a date for the referendum would be set.

(ii) Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). Quotes for planting at Small Gains and the Recreation Ground were expected soon.

(iii) Yearbook Group (leader Cllr Norton Mahy). The Deputy Clerk was commended for the number of advert bookings that she had achieved to date and more might be added in January. All contributors were reminded that the copy deadline was 1st December.

(iv) Conservation Area Review Group (leader David Short). The group leader and other members were commended on the excellent report that they had produced. This had been sent to the consultants commissioned by NHDC to carry out the review. Their draft report was due to go to NHDC in February and would be followed by a public consultation later in the year.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders were reinstated from here.

65. MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS.

See also appendices below.

(i) The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a site visit with a representative from the Countryside Management Service had been arranged to determine what input they might contribute to updating the management plan and leading volunteer working parties.

(ii) Playground. Cllr Gemma Allan reported that further consultation on new equipment would take place once a response to the funding bid to the Henry Colbron Trust had been received.

66. PLANNING MATTERS

See appendix below with a summary of recent NHDC consultations and their status.

66.1 New consultations received from NHDC.

66.1.1 No.12 Newnham Way. NHDC ref. 21/03101/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension, undercroft storage area and reworking of existing patio to include additional side steps.

It was noted that no public comments had, to date, been posted on the NHDC website or received by the Parish Council.

It was **resolved** to respond to the NHDC consultation with a recommendation that permission be granted. **Action: Clerk**

66.1.2 Land development site off Station Road. Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against the refusal by NHDC (ref. APP/X1925/W/21/3279843).

[Land Development Site off Station Road. NHDC case ref. 20/03070/FP.

Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 28 no. dwellings and landscaping including pond, wildflower meadow and woodland and associated infrastructure.]

The consultation by NHDC was noted.

It was **resolved** that no additional comments should be added to the objections sent to NHDC in February 2021. **Action: Clerk**

66.2 Trees in the Conservation Area (TCA)/Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

Cllr David Sims reported that consultations on two TCA's had been received from NHDC.

(i) 5 Silver Street. NHDC ref. 21/03299/TCA. T2 Silver birch - Crown reduce to previous points up to 3 m. All pruning back to viable growth points.

(ii) 3 Silver Street. NHDC ref. 21/03300/TCA. T3 Acacia - Fell to ground level.

Whilst the felling of a tree was always regrettable he was of the view that the reasons for this were acceptable.

It was **resolved** that no objections would be raised.

Action: Deputy Clerk

66.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing:

66.3.1 Townsend Meadow (Land at the junction of Station Road and Ashwell Street, NHDC ref. nos. 19/00455/FP and 20/02599/S73).

See 64.2 (ii) above.

66.3.2 Land East Of 35 Ashwell Street. NHDC ref.21/01825/FP

The information from the NHDC Planning Officer was noted and a decision by NHDC awaited.

67. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

67.1 Monthly summary of accounts. Proposal for approval. These were approved for signature.

Action: Graham/Martin/Clerk

67.2 Budget and precept for 2022-23.

It was noted that, further to the meeting held on 28th October, a range of options with figures had been circulated. A proposal was made that option one be accepted. This would include an increase to the precept of 2.75%, ie below inflation level (from £81,000 this financial year to £82,350 next). Due to the increase in the number of households the impact on an individual council tax bill would be small but it would provide some additional funds for expenditure on village premises and community projects.

67.2.1 Proposal for acceptance of the budget for 2022-23.

It was **resolved** that this be accepted.

Action: Clerk

67.2.2 Proposal to set the Parish Precept for 2022-23 at £82,350

It was **resolved** that this be accepted.

Action: Clerk

67.3 The Chairman reported that he and one other councillor had received a letter from the Deputy Monitoring Officer at NHDC in relation to a formal complaint that had been made by an Ashwell resident. It had been alleged that the Code of Conduct had been broken. A response had been requested to the the matters raised within 14 days and this was being prepared to meet this deadline.

Meeting closed at 21.20

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 5th January 2022

APPENDICES – FOR INFORMATION

Appendix A: Parish Council actions ongoing.

(i) Liaison with **HCC/Herts Highways** through our County Cllr Steve Jarvis re residents' concerns of vegetation overhanging roads and paths, works by an electricity company in Lucas Lane, proposals for safety improvements at the War Memorial junction and street lighting issues in Station Road. New yellow lines requested by the Parish Council have been installed and additional locations are under consideration.

(ii) Liaison with the **police re a parking** issue in Station Road.

(iii) **Village Hall.** Communications with the solicitor and the Village Hall Management trustees is ongoing to change their status to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation.

(iv) Response to a **Defra consultation** re protection of groundwater resources. The proposals include some that would impact burials at the Cemetery.

(v) Liaison with the NHDC street naming officer and local residents re the developer's tardy installation of the approved signage to the **Claybush Hill Meadow** site.

Appendix B: Reports/updates on Parish Council Premises Management.

(i) **Grounds' maintenance.** Any further hedge maintenance required will be undertaken in the spring. Tree works recommended following the annual professional tree reports are pending quotes.

(ii) **Small Gains** sports and allotment area (Cllr David Sims). A supplier has been briefed re the second phase of the new tree planting and hedge works.

(iii) **Recreation Ground.** Plans for new play equipment aimed particularly at older children are pending responses to funding bids and further consultation with stakeholders. Proposals for some tree and hedge infill planting are pending responses from potential suppliers.

Appendix C: Summary of recent NHDC Planning Application consultations and their status as of 1st December 2021.

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
12 Newnham Way	21/03101/FPH	Single storey rear extension, undercroft storage area & reworking of existing patio to include additional	PC to NHDC: No objections	Pending
Land Opposite 67 Station Road	21/02803/FP	Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling	PC to NHDC: No objections	Pending
Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP	Erection of 2 detached dwellings (1 x 2 bed & 1 x 4 bed) including alterations to existing vehicular access	PC to NHDC: Objections	Pending
Ashwell Primary School, Silver Street	21/02560/FP	Creation of designated drop-off zone for vulnerable & special needs children	PC to NHDC: No objection	PERMISSION GRANTED
Ashwell End Farm, Loves Lane	21/02042/FPH	Single Storey side & rear extensions following demolition of existing detached rear outbuilding	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land east of 35 Ashwell Street	21/01825/FP	Erection of one 4 bed dwelling (revision of previously approved planning application, 20/01712/FP granted on 28/9/2020)	PC to NHDC: Objections	Pending

Appendix D: Monthly accounts summary for November (01/11/2021 -30/11/2021)

RECEIPTS					£
67	Neville Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (Nov)			68.75
68	Dignity Funerals	CW21.26 - Ashes interment			230.00
69	I R Quince	CW21.28 - Memorial headstone			140.00
70	EH Crouch	CW21.27 - Ashes Interment			230.00
71	Dignity Funerals	CW21.10 - Ashes Interment & Headstone			620.00
72	Allotment Tenant	Rental for Plot number 4a			10.00
73	Santander	Reserve Account interest			0.18
				Total	1,298.93
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
158	Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services	Toilet Cleaning & Consumables for October Inv no 2323	180.00		180.00
159	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet number 23, Inv no 22078	235.00	47.00	282.00
160	PKF Little John	External Audit to end March 2021	400.00	80.00	480.00
161	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting for October Inv no 9501	120.00		120.00
162	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Nov)	25.00	5.00	30.00
163	Allotment for Exercise & Recreation (charity account)	Transfer to charity account from PC account	10.00		10.00
164	Iain Murray - Herts Computer Services	Remote IT Support, Inv no 1571	20.00		20.00
165	BT Landline & Internet	Landline & broadband for office Inv on 4.8.2021	128.85	25.77	154.62
166	EON Next	Electricity for Public Toilets October	13.62	0.68	14.30
167	20's plenty for us	Bin stickers for 20's plenty campaign	220.00		220.00
168	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension	740.66		740.66
169	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	Tax&NI to Inland Revenue	501.19		501.19
170	Iain Murray - Herts Computer Services	Remote IT Support, Inv no 1585	59.19		59.19
171	Clerk	Reimbursement re postage, Microsoft account, Land Regist	72.38	16.00	88.38
172	Clerk	Salary	1395.70		1,395.70
173	ECO	Salary	236.80		236.80
174	Grounds Officer	Salary	153.60		153.60
175	Deputy Clerk	Salary	850.91		850.91
		TOTAL	5,362.90	174.45	5,537.35
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 30/11/2021	£44,279.62		
		Reserve Account 30/11/2021	£20,703.75		