

Minutes

of the Parish Council AGM/monthly meeting held on Wednesday 4th May 2022 at the Parish Room.

Present: Parish Councillors Gemma Allan, Graham Lee (Chairman) and Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman), Cath Connolly and David Sims. Martin Hoffman and Mark White joined on Zoom (MH- medical reason, MW- other commitment). There were no apologies.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne) on Zoom. District Councillor Tom Tyson joined on Zoom. Eight members of the public were present and five also joined on Zoom.

Following a request from a Parishioner it was agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

Standing Orders were suspended for some parts of the meeting to allow members of the public to speak.

- 1 Election of Chairman. A proposal was made to re-elect Graham Lee.**
It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**
- 2 Election of Vice-Chairman. A proposal was made to re-elect Norton Mahy.**
It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**
- 3 Review of policies and documents held.**
It was noted these would be reviewed as part of the annual audit process.
See item 12.2 below.
- 4 Roles and responsibilities.**
The following were reviewed and agreed.
Premises. (i) Recreation Ground including the pavilion, playground and public toilets -Gemma Allan and Graham Lee, (ii) The Springs -Martin Hoffman, (iii) Small Gains -David Sims, (iv) The Lock Up -Norton Mahy, (v) Carters Pond and Merchant Taylors Green -Martin Hoffman, (vi) St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance and PCC liaison -Martin Hoffman, (vii) Parish Clock -Clerk, (viii) War Memorial and liaison with Ashwell Royal British Legion -Clerk, (ix) Cemetery -Clerk, (x) Street furniture owned by the Parish -Clerk/Deputy Clerk, (xi) Grounds maintenance contracts -Deputy Clerk.

Working Groups. (i) Neighbourhood Plan group -leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy, (ii) Litter picking group - leader Cllr Cath Connolly, (iii) Trees and Hedges Group -leader Cllr David Sims, (iv) Village Sports Day -leader Parishioner Guy Reed.

Liaison with other authorities. (i) Herts Highways -David Sims, (ii) HCC Rights of Way -Graham Lee, (iii) NHC re street cleansing -Clerk/Deputy Clerk.

Employee recruitment, contractual matters and performance reviews. For the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Grounds Officer and Environmental Cleansing Officer -Chairman Graham Lee.

5 **Memberships.** The following were noted - HAPTC/NALC, SLCC, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, CPRE, GLEAM.

6 **Appointments to other bodies and representatives for other bodies.** The following were reviewed and agreed.

6.1 **Ashwell Village Trust** (charity no. 294673)

It was noted that the Chairman was the chairman of the trust and two parish councillors were trustees (currently David Sims and Mark White).

6.2 Allotment for Exercise and Recreation (charity no. 245521)

It was noted that the Parish Council was the sole trustee.

The date for the AGM was to be agreed. **Action: Deputy Clerk/Graham**

6.3 Moss Cottage Homes

It was noted that four trustee positions are nominated by the Parish Council. Currently these were:

Madeleine Legg (May 2018 until May 2022)

Ann Robertshaw (March 2020 until March 2024)

Phillida Shaw (March 2020 until 2024)

Cliff Jenkinson (March 2018 until May 2022)

It was proposed that Madeleine Legg be re-appointed and Cllr Cath Connolly be nominated to fill the other vacancy.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk/Cath**

6.4 Henry Colbron Trust and liaison with the School.

Cllr Gemma Allan to continue as representative.

6.5 **Ashwell Museum liaison.** Cllr Martin Hoffman to continue as representative.

6.6 **Ashwell Village Hall liaison.** Chairman Graham Lee to continue as representative.

Regular business of the monthly meeting follows from here.

7 Declarations of Interest. None.

8 Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2022.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk/Graham**

9 OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE MATTERS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC

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

9.1 Items from members of the public.

9.1.1 Safer routes to the station for pedestrians and cyclists. Cllr Martin Hoffman gave a brief background. He had been leading on this project for some years and now wished to introduce the landowner, Mr Christopher Fordham, to give further information. Mr Fordham reported that he was the owner of the land identified for part of the route, ie the field adjacent to the s-bend section with hedges on either side. He was supportive in principle of the objectives and his desire was to be as helpful as possible. However, he had concerns about any possible liability and the costs of construction and maintenance; he did not wish to take responsibility for these. Also, he had obtained information on the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists using the route to the station and was not convinced of the need. As an alternative he offered the possibility of his providing financial support to another Ashwell project that would be of more value. Chairman Graham Lee thanked him for this and for clarifying the situation re land ownership. It was noted that the hope was for more people to access the station on bicycle or on foot if the route was made safer. Parishioner Guy Reed also commended Mr Fordham's support. He had represented the Parish Council in obtaining the priority route status and was liaising with relevant officers at NHC. Mr Fordham reported that he would be pleased to supply land so that the hedge-line could be moved to provide space for a new section of footpath. He was thanked for this 'excellent offer' and for attending the meeting. It was agreed that District Cllr Tom Tyson and County Cllr Steve Jarvis be requested to take this up with their relevant authorities.

Action: Clerk/Graham

A member of the public suggested that a local developer be approached with a request for section 106 funding.

- 9.1.2 **Jubilee street party.** It was noted that the venue had been changed to the junction of Swan Street and Mill Street following objections by Herts Highways to closing the High Street. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he was assisting the organisers with the supply of chairs and tables. It was noted that the Parish Council had already committed £800 to support the party; it was agreed that an additional £300 be made available if required. Further publicity by the organisers was planned.
- 9.1.3 **Voneus Broadband proposals for high-speed fibre internet.** Parishioner Al Jacoutot who had been liaising on behalf of the Parish Council reported that Voneus were planning to hold a public walk-in event later in the month. He was chasing them for a date and discussing publicity with them.
- 9.1.4 **Bygrave solar farm.** James Colegrave, as representative of the Bygrave action group opposing the development, gave an update. A planning application had now been submitted to NHC; the public consultation had now been extended until 3rd June. The planning application would be decided by the NHC committee probably in July. His group had distributed another information leaflet to residents citing objections including the adverse impact on the landscape (North Baldock Chalk Uplands), the loss of high-quality agricultural land (Grade II), adverse impact on Arbury Banks (scheduled ancient monument) and wildlife concerns. Information on how to object was also available on their website, on posters and banners and in the local press. He encouraged the Parish Council and others to make their objections to NHC. It was noted that the Parish Council wished to ensure that a balance of views and relevant facts was available to parishioners. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the Parish Council would consider its response once it had listened to the views expressed by Ashwell residents. Cllr Norton Mahy noted that the Parish Council would also be taking into consideration the relevant national and local planning policy including the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council would then write formally to NHC and would also request a slot to speak at the NHC committee meeting.

A parishioner requested whether the Parish Council had suggested alternative sites. It was reiterated that a response would be agreed once feedback from residents had been considered.

Mr Colegrave was thanked for his attendance.

9.2 Report from our district councillor Tom Tyson.

Townsend Meadow. *See also item 11.4 below.* He had requested an update from the NHC enforcement team and understood that drawings for the new footway had now been submitted. Leverage on the developer to ensure that the planning condition was met was a matter for the enforcement team. There were safety issues and principle involved. He had also followed up on a request by a local resident to get the advertising hoarding removed from the site.

9.3 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

9.3.1 Village Hall trustees/re their change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council. It was reported that communications with the Solicitor were ongoing.

9.3.2 Community Land Trust/Community Benefit Society (CBS). Update on communications with the solicitor. Chairman Graham Lee reported that very recently the draft application for submission to the Financial Conduct Authority had been received from the solicitor. This structure would achieve the objective, ie to have the power to bid for land put up for sale. This would of course be subject to being able to raise funds and consultation with the village. Community benefit might mean, for example, affordable housing or preservation of green space. Parishioners would have the right to become members and to have a say as 'shareholders'; they would appoint the directors of the organisation.

A parishioner expressed his doubts about the effectiveness. Given the high land values in Ashwell the funds required would be beyond the reach of the Parish Council. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the view of the Parish Council was that an effort had to be made to try and influence what happens to the few sites remaining that could be used for community benefit and to maintain the character of the village. Whether a CBS proved to be effective immediately or maybe in the longer-term time would tell. Concern was expressed that by identifying sites this might inflate their price.

The parishioner commented on the issues of development outside the settlement boundary, community interest and 'breathing space'. Chairman Graham Lee reported that he and Vice-chairman Norton Mahy had attended a seminar and had seen a number of examples of villages similar to Ashwell who had achieved successful outcomes. There were, for example, schemes in conjunction with other organisations such as housing associations that gave greater priority for local people.

The parishioner expressed his concerns at the expenditure on legal fees with no benefit guaranteed. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the Parish Council had agreed that the sums involved were worthwhile; the budget was £2,000 with £1,500 already spent on the solicitor and an estimate for the remaining costs in hand.

9.3.3 **Assets of Community Value.** Re-submission of the nominations to NHC for the three village pubs was pending more detailed information. A nomination request for the URC hall was in hand.

9.3.4 The Ruddery/update on the request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the HCC case officer had now left and a replacement was pending. The early stage consultation with local residents by HCC was ongoing.

A parishioner requested that his question put at the April Council meeting that had not been minuted be noted. This had been 'whether there would be restrictions for two-wheeled traffic?': there would not.

9.3.5 **NHC review of the Ashwell Conservation Area.** Chairman Graham Lee reported that comments had been received from a relatively small number of parishioners with a balance between those in favour and those with concerns. As had been advertised these would be forwarded unedited to the relevant authority, ie NHC. He reiterated that the Parish Council had no idea what the NHC consultant would conclude from his research or what had come from the Parish Council or what NHC would conclude themselves. NHC would consult fully with residents and it was now out of the hands of the Parish Council.

A parishioner questioned whether the actions of the Parish Council had followed the NHC consultants' brief. He also

questioned how the working group had operated such as whether areas for inclusion had been identified first and the justification for this then made afterwards. Chairman Graham Lee expressed the view that to select extracts from email communications between members of the working group did not do justice to the approach taken by people who had considerable experience in these matters. A view was expressed that the working group was now closed and it was time to move forward.

The parishioner repeated his concerns about the process that had been adopted by the Parish Council. Chairman Graham Lee emphasised that the review was ultimately the responsibility of NHC and not the Parish Council.

9.4 Items from working groups.

- 9.4.1 Neighbourhood Plan group (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). Norton Mahy reported that the plan had now been formally 'made' by NHC and was now part of their planning policy.
- 9.4.2 Litter picking group (leader Cllr Cath Connolly). Cath Connolly reported on the successful event held on 9th April. The involvement of local groups such as the school and the Scouts/Beavers would be considered for future events. Chairman Graham Lee gave an update on communications with the landowner re the accumulation of dog waste at Partridge Hill. The Parish Council had offered assistance with removal and publicity re trespass and damage to private farmland.
- 9.4.3 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported that the planting at the Rec and Small Gains was looking good. Further planting was planned for the autumn.

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

- 10.1 Recreation Ground/consultation on new equipment for older children. Cllr Gemma Allan reported that the information from the consultation had been collated; this was in favour of keeping but updating the skateboard area. Funding was in place for this and other new equipment with installation planned for the end of the year. The need for additional pitch space for football was noted.
- 10.2 Pavilion and public toilets upgrade project. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the stage 2 design proposals from the architect were

awaited. A site visit to further assess the building structure was pending. Cllr Cath Connolly had progressed some research on funding sources.

- 10.3 The Springs/update on planned actions following Natural England approval and involvement of Greening Ashwell in volunteer working parties. It was reported that the Greening Ashwell group had received advice on tasks to be undertaken and working parties were being planned. Installation of the fencing and new bins as agreed by Natural England was pending dates from suppliers.

11 PLANNING MATTERS

New consultations received from North Herts Council.

- 11.1 Land Adjacent To 4, Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 22/00880/FP.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of a detached 3-bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street.

The site visit by two parish councillors prior to this meeting was noted.

The one comment on the NHC portal in support was noted.

Cllr Norton Mahy reported that the application had been checked against the relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies. Sustainability and parking provision had in particular been considered.

A proposal was made that the application be supported.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Deputy Clerk

- 11.2 **No. 10 Newnham Way.** NHC ref. 22/00915/FPH.

Full Planning Permission: First floor front extension, ground floor front infill extension, two storey side and rear extensions with Juliette balcony on rear extension, reconstruction of attached garage following part demolition of existing garage and associated internal alterations, and alterations to openings.

It was noted that there were no comments on the NHC portal.

Cllr Norton Mahy reported that the application had been checked against the relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies. The impact on views and the design raised no particular issues. The increase from 3 to 5 bedrooms and the loss of a smaller house was of concern and contrary to Neighbourhood Plan policy.

A proposal was made that these points be conveyed to the NHC planning officer.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Deputy Clerk

- 11.3 Valentine House, Partridge Hill 22/00934/S73.

Section 73 application to remove condition 3 which restricts permitted development rights (Class E), as imposed on the original planning permission reference 94/00713/1 granted on 21.06.1994 for detached 4-bedroom dwelling with double garage.

Chairman Graham Lee reported that District Cllr Tom Tyson had obtained some background from when the condition had been imposed; this had included concerns about the impact on views. An email had been received from the applicant giving further information. The comments from neighbours had also been noted. Concern had been expressed that there had been insufficient information supplied with the application for the Parish Council to base any comments. A proposal was made to respond to the NHC planning officer accordingly.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

11.4 No.102 Station Road. NHC ref. 22/01020/FPH.

Full Planning Permission: First floor front extension over existing entrance.

A proposal was made that the application be supported.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

11.5 No. 87 Back Street 22/01127/LBC and 22/01126/FPH

Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent: Replace existing garage doors with a window to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation and refurbish existing front elevation door.

Concerns were expressed at the loss of a parking space; relevant NHC and Neighbourhood Plan policies were noted. Given the concerns expressed about the lack of parking space in Back Street, as had been the case elsewhere, a proposal was made that an objection be made to the NHC planning officer.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

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

No. 87 Back Street. 22/00940/TCA. Mulberry: Crown reduce as hard as possible whilst retaining viable growth points. This would amount to approximately 1m in height and 2-3 m from the sides.

A proposal was made that the application be supported.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

11.7 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing.

- 11.7.1 **Land Development Site off Station Road** (NHC ref 20/03070/FP)/ Appeal to the Planning Inspector. To note that the national Inspector has over-ruled the refusal by NHC and permission is now granted.

Chairman Graham Lee reported that an email had been received from the NHC planning officer confirming that there were no financial elements in the Inspector's appeal decision that would permit any claim either by the District or the Parish Council to claim any section 106 contribution. It was agreed that this was very disappointing and other possible options would be pursued.

- 11.7.2 **Townsend Meadow** (Land at the junction of Station Road and Ashwell Street, NHC refs. 19/00455/FP and 20/02599/S73).

See item 9.2 above.

- 11.8 Land West Of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB 22/00741/FP

Full Planning Permission: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.

<https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R8QW80LKK8000>

See item 9.1.4 above.

12 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

- 12.1 Monthly summary of accounts.

It was proposed that these be accepted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

- 12.2 Audit 2021-22. The information received from the External Auditor and the timetable for the submission of the respective required documents, ie (i) to the Internal Auditor and approval by the Parish Council at the June Council meeting, (ii) to the External Auditor by 1st July 2022, was noted.

- 12.3 Co-options to the council. Chairman Graham Lee reported that three individuals had expressed an interest and either had or were in the process of providing some information about themselves. It was agreed that a transparent process be agreed for assessing these and appointments made.

Meeting closed at 10.30pm.

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 1st June 2022

APPENDIX A: Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 9th May 2022.

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHDC up to 9th May 2022				
Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
87 Back Street	22/01126/FP &22/001127/LBC	Replace existing garage doors with a window to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation and refurbish existing front elevation door.	PC to NHDC: Objection	Pending
10 Newnham Way	22/00915/FPH	First floor front extension, ground floor front infill extension, two storey side and rear extensions with Juliette balcony on rear extension, reconstruction of attached garage following part demolition of existing garage and associated internal alterations, and alterations to openings	PC to NHDC: neutral, the loss of a smaller house was of concern and contrary to Neighbourhood Plan policy.	Pending
Valentine House, Partridge Hill	22/00934/573	Section 73 application to remove condition 3 which restricts permitted development rights (Class E), as imposed on the original planning permission reference 94/00713/1 granted on 21.06.1994 for detached 4 bedroom dwelling with double garage.	PC to NHDC: neutral, insufficient information supplied for the PC to make comment	Pending
102 Station Road	22/01020/FPH	First floor front extension over existing entrance	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land Adj to 4 Ashwell Street	22/00880/FP	Erection of a detached 3 bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
4 The Rickyard	22/00735/FPH	Installation of external metal flue to existing side elevation chimney stack.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land Adjacent To 4, Ashwell Street	22/00880/FP	Erection of a detached 3-bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Quarry Hills Barn, Loves Lane	22/00641/FPH	Addition of ground mounted solar panels in garden, to exceed area of 9m2 that could be added under permitted development. Addition of 16 panels 1x1.5m along hedgerow to the East, occupying 4x10m area, max height 1.5m. Electrical connection to existing fusebox via trench under garden. Not visible from property entrance.	PC to NHDC: No objection	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: Objection	Pending
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	Permission Granted 9/5/2022

APPENDIX: Accounts summary 01/04/2022- 30/04/2022

RECEIPTS					£		
1	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (April)			68.75		
2	Bery Accounting	Advert for Yearbook 2022			80.00		
3	North Herts District Council	Half of Precept for 2022-2023			41,175.00		
4	Herts County Council	Grant for Queen's Green Canopy tree and hedge planting			350.00		
5	James Pepper Monumental Masons	CW 20.14 - Memorial Stone			140.00		
6	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 4a			10.00		
7	Ashwell Garage	Advert for Yearbook 2022			80.00		
8	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 8a & 8b			20.00		
9	Madeleine Short	Yearbook Sales x 2			6.00		
10	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 13b			10.00		
11	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 7a			10.00		
12	Gill George	Advert for Yearbook 2022			40.00		
13	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 11			20.00		
14	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 7b			10.00		
15	Allotment Tenant	2022 Rental for Small Gains Plot 1			20.00		
16	Santander	Reserve Account Interest			0.18		
				Total	£42,039.93		
PAYMENTS					£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
1	North Herts District Council	Annual Dog Bin Waste Collection	1198.69			1,198.69	
2	North Herts District Council	Recreation Ground trade waste bin	111.80			111.80	
3	North Herts District Council	Streets Support trade waste bin	126.10			126.10	
4	North Herts District Council	Springs trade waste bin	126.10			126.10	
5	HAPTC	Annual Subscription	794.78			794.78	
6	Abacus Cleaning Supplies	Stationary Supplies	238.25	47.65		285.90	
7	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet number 1, inv no 2230	612.00	122.40		734.40	
8	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet number 2, inv no 2235	424.00	84.80		508.80	
9	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting on Rec, Inv No 9812	127.50			127.50	
10	Ashwell Youth & Community Centre	Use of Village Hall for PC Meeting	17.30			17.30	
11	The Bluetree Company	Tree Works at The Springs	1115.00	223.00		1,338.00	
12	Due Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (April)	25.00	5.00		30.00	
13	Cllr David Sims	Reimbursement - Canes for new hedging at Rec Ground	33.75			33.75	
14	Glasdon UK Limited	Dog Waste Bin	214.29	42.86		257.15	
15	EON Next	Electricity for Public Toilets inv on 20.5.21	13.66	0.68		14.34	
16	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet number 3, inv no 2237	142.00	28.40		170.40	
17	SLCC	Annual Membership	186.00			186.00	
18	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	935.30			935.30	
19	Clerk	Clerk salary	1655.71			1,655.71	
20	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	244.00			244.00	
21	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	175.80			175.80	
22	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	1029.13			1,029.13	
23	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	850.57			850.57	
		TOTAL	£10,396.73	£554.79		£10,951.52	
	MONEY AT BANK	Current Account 30/04/2022	£79,010.80				
		Reserve Account 30/04/2022	£20,704.62				