

Minutes

of the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Wed 2nd February 2022

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

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne); County Councillor Steve Jarvis; two representatives from Bygrave Parish Council, Phil Hills Chairman and James Colegrave Chairman of the action group for the proposed solar farm development (see item 78.1.2 below); two representatives of the Village Hall, Michael Pearch Chairman and Rosemary Pearch Clerk (see item 78.4.1 below). Six other members of the public also joined on Zoom. District Councillor Tom Tyson had given his apologies due to another commitment.

75 Apologies for absence from parish councillors. These were noted and approved: Gemma Allan (family commitment), Mark White (other commitment).

76 Declarations of Interest. None.

77 Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 5th January 2022.

These were approved.

Action: Clerk/Graham

The draft minutes of the Ashwell Village Trust held on 7th December 2021 were noted.

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

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

78.1 Items from members of the public.

78.1.1 Footway route to the station improvements. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the Parish Council had received a letter and information from Jeremy Fordham on his proposals for development on his land in Steeple Morden Parish at Odsey. These included a proposal to create a new length of footway on land adjacent to the most dangerous section of road just inside the Cambridgeshire county boundary. Two possible options for the route were given. The other proposals included a development of a small number of houses on the site of the derelict farmyard in Odsey and a new car park for station users. Mr Fordham was seeking the Parish Council's support for his proposals and their preference for the precise route of the new section of footway. It was noted that the Parish Council had previously given its support in principle to similar proposals following communications some years ago.

Cllr Martin Hoffman proposed that as the Parish Council was in favour of improving and making safer the route to the station, support should be given in principle to the proposals. There was a preference for the route on the right-hand side (marked in red) as this reduced the need to cross the road.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk

78.1.2 Bygrave solar farm proposal. The Chairman Graham Lee reported that the Parish Council would not be giving any formal opinions at this pre-application stage, ie before a formal planning application had been submitted to NHC. He welcomed representatives of Bygrave Parish Council to the meeting to give an update. It was noted that the site (called Topham's field) was in Bygrave not Ashwell. Bygrave Chairman Phil Hills reported that they had organised a public meeting in Bygrave where the developer had

presented their current proposals, and a further meeting in Baldock where an action group had been formed. James Colegrave, as Chairman of the action group, reported that they were not opposed in principle to solar farms, indeed they were fully supportive of green energy. However, this was not the right location for a solar farm. Objections to this site included the adverse impact on views from Arbury Banks and the views from Ashwell, loss of grade 2 agricultural land, and the adverse impact of the construction traffic proposed to be routed through Ashwell. If the proposals went ahead, once the units had reached the end of their useful life, some 40 years, the site would be designated as brownfield and deemed suitable for housing development. The action group were preparing a leaflet of key facts for distribution in local villages as well as a website and posters. The views expressed by organisations such CPRE had been noted and lobbying of key council members was planned. All support would be welcomed.

In response to questions he reported that the impact on wildlife, the aspect of the site (mostly north facing), and the adverse impact on food security resulting from the loss of agricultural land had all been noted.

Both were thanked for their attendance and it was agreed that the information would be conveyed to Ashwell parishioners.

- 78.1.3 Village Street Party for the Queen's Jubilee, Sunday 5th June.** Chairman Graham Lee noted that the Parish Council had responded to the organisers' request for funding and had agreed a sum to cover the basic costs. A representative requested information on bus services in order to respond to questions required by various authorities. County Councillor Steve Jarvis was able to confirm that as there was no service on a Sunday there would be no conflict and offered to assist further if needed.
- 78.1.4 Moss Cottage Homes.** Representative Madeleine Legg reported that there was one vacancy for a newly refurbished unit.
- 78.1.5 Springs hedge.** In response to a question Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that this was scheduled to be cut in the next few weeks.
- 78.2 North Herts Council (NHC).** The Chairman reported on updates supplied by District Councillor Tom Tyson.
- 78.2.1** Parking enforcement. The NHC officer had issued notices and had attended at the school during pick-up time to act as a deterrent.
- 78.2.2** Damaged street name sign in Ashwell Street. Replacement had been scheduled.
- 78.2.3** Abandoned car in Silver Street. This had now been removed.
- 78.2.4** Bygrave Woods music festivals. The site owner had informed that four events were planned this year but only that for the weekend of 20th August had been confirmed. He was to contact the NHC licensing officer to request whether the number of events in any year could be capped.
- 78.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).**
County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported.
- 78.3.1** War Memorial junction and Lucas Lane. Following the site meeting with representatives of the Parish Council and the Ashwell British Legion he had been liaising with highways engineers. Works to extend the pedestrian area in front of the War Memorial were likely to be completed early in the next financial year. Further discussion was to take place on the proposal for a new access point to the Rec and the War Memorial from Lucas Lane.
- 78.3.2** Yellow lines. Installation of agreed new lines in Silver Street were pending better weather. Once a date was agreed, requesting residents to move their cars would help

get the job done more efficiently. Lines already eroding at the junction of High Street/Gardiners Lane would be repainted.

78.3.3 New streetlight columns in Claybush Road. These had been installed as part of the development and were not of the heritage swan-neck design or colour as others in Claybush Road. The developer would be approached to request they be changed but as they were not covered by the planning permission this could not be enforced. Highways would not cover the cost as they were not in the conservation area. It was noted that for any future development, specification re any streetlights should be included in the permission given.

78.3.4 Patching and resurfacing. Some local roads were scheduled for this year.

78.3.5 West End chicane. In response to questions by Cllr Martin Hoffman. The delay had been due to addressing the safety concerns that had been raised; these were now resolved but the date for the work had to be rescheduled.

78.3.6 Streetlight at the Springhead/Lucas Lane junction. In response to a parishioner's question. This long-term failure was due to an electrical fault. There was no statutory timescale for the authority responsible, UK Power Networks, to repair such faults. He would chase it up again.

78.4 Any items on general village matters from parish councillors.

See further below for premises reports.

78.4.1 **Village Hall.** Ongoing communications with the Clerk to the Village Hall re their preferred options to change their status to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council.

Chairman Graham Lee reported that there had been a good amount of communications between the Village Hall and the Parish Council. The proposal now on the table from the Village Hall was for a different legal framework to that originally planned. The Parish Council was concerned with the property aspect as an asset to be preserved for the whole community.

It was agreed that due to the sensitive nature of the matter, ie legal matters, that further discussion would be held in camera, ie with the public excluded from the meeting.

[Standing order 10.i. 'to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest']

Chairman Graham Lee reported that minutes of the *in camera* part would be made public after the meeting.

[Minute in camera session]

It was noted that the latest proposal from the Village Hall was for them to become an Incorporated Charitable Organisation (ICO). This would have several advantages for them including a limit on the personal liability of the trustees. They had suggested to the Parish Council that it might wish to consider, (i) that the property title be vested in the Parish Council, (ii) the Parish Council have the right to appoint a trustee of the Village Hall.

It was noted that the previously agreed role of the Parish Council, to become a holding/custodian trustee for the property title, was to ensure the long-term security of the premises as a village asset. Concern had thus been raised that a clause in the proposed ICO document (section 4(3)) would give the Village Hall trustees the power to dispose of this asset.

It was proposed that legal advice be sought to ensure that this clause could be removed or, invalidated by the vesting of the property title with the Parish Council.

It was proposed that the Parish Council would be in favour of a clause that gave it a right to appoint a trustee to the Village Hall at any time but this would not be mandatory.

It was resolved that the above two proposals be accepted.

Action:

Clerk/Graham

It was agreed that the response to the solicitor include both of the two items resolved above alongside the proposals and questions that had been put by the Village Hall in relation to the ICO.

[End of in camera session]

- 78.4.2 Dixies Meadow.** Ongoing communications with the landowner and investigation into the options available for community benefit including a Community Land Trust.

Chairman Graham Lee reported that he and Cllr Norton Mahy had attended a further meeting with the site owners. There were several issues that he was trying to follow up with them.

It was agreed that due to the sensitive nature of the matter, ie legal and financial matters, that further discussion would be held *in camera*, ie with the public excluded from the meeting.

[Standing order 10.i. 'to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest']

The Chairman reported that minutes of the in camera part would be made public after the meeting.

[Minute in camera session]

The investigations into a Community Land Trust by the Parish Council had been put to the site owners. To date they had not commented on this.

Following discussion a proposal was made that the Parish Council should progress with setting up a Community Land Trust through the solicitor who had given advice and costings. This would be a valuable vehicle for the village to have in place either now or in the future.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Graham

[End of in camera session]

- 78.4.3 Assets of Community Value.** Chairman Graham Lee reported that it was proposed to submit requests to NHC for the registration of all three village pubs and the site of the BT telephone exchange. Should any planning application for a change of use be made for these the Parish Council would have the right to be informed.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Graham

- 78.4.4 The Ruddy.** Request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. Nothing further to report.

- 78.4.5 New PCSO.** Hannah Moss had joined the Royston Neighbourhood Team alongside PCSO Chris Braybrook.

- 78.4.6 Co-options to the Parish Council.** Chairman Graham Lee reported that following recent publicity some approaches had already been made to ascertain interest and others would be once contact details had been determined.

78.5 Working groups' reports.

- 78.5.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group,** (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). Chairman Graham Lee reported that NHC had now confirmed the date of the referendum as Thursday 3rd March. He again thanked all who had been involved. Voting cards had already been received by some residents and the planned publicity would commence next week. As this was a the first ever Ashwell referendum it was a significant moment and of great importance to the village. Generation of enthusiasm and interest was vital. He hoped for a high turnout.

78.5.2 **Trees and Hedges Group** (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported that good tree and hedge planting had taken place at several locations. This had been initiated by several village groups including Greening Ashwell and a local residents' group as well as the Parish Council. A further section of hedging was planned at the Rec.

78.5.3 **Yearbook Group** (leader Cllr Norton Mahy). Norton Mahy reported that all was on course for distribution over the weekend of 26/27th February.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated from here.

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

See appendices below for other actions completed, ongoing and premises matters.

79.1 **Recreation Ground/proposals for new equipment for older children.** Chairman Graham Lee reported on behalf of Cllr Gemma Allan. The proposals for enhancing the facilities for older children were undergoing further consultation so that what was done would fully consider their wishes. A key part of this was whether to keep the skateboard area or to replace it. Funding following the successful bid to the Henry Colbron Trust had been received.

79.2 **Pavilion and public toilets/proposals to address the need for a major upgrade of facilities.** Chairman Graham Lee reported that some funds were available, held by NHC, from section 106 agreements and other planning obligations. It was agreed that doing nothing was no longer an option; the facilities needed to be upgraded to an enhanced standard and made suitable for increased use.

It was agreed that due to the sensitive nature of the matter, ie financial matters, that further discussion would be held in camera, ie with the public excluded from the meeting.

[Standing order 10.i. 'to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest']

The Chairman reported that minutes of the in camera part would be made public after the meeting.

[Minute in camera session]

Chairman Graham Lee reported that a company based in Hitchin had been approached with a view to their providing professional advice from an architect, a building survey and estimates for possible options.

A proposal was made that this be progressed. Some funds were available in the Parish Council's budget but NHC would also be approached to release funds from section 106/other planning obligations held.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk/Graham

[End of in camera session]

80 PLANNING MATTERS

80.1 **New consultations received from North Herts Council.** Responses to be agreed.

80.1.1 Land adjacent to Ashridge Farmhouse, Ashwell Street (tennis club site). NHC ref. 22/00027/FP

Full Planning Permission: Erection of wooden structure with a veranda for use as a clubhouse and storage for the tennis club and erection of additional fencing.

It was agreed that the site name be queried with the Planning Officer.

It was resolved that there were no objections and a recommendation for approval be sent to the Planning Officer.

Deputy Clerk

Action:

80.1.2 Ashwell End Farm, Loves Lane. NHC ref. 22/00013/FP

Full Planning Permission: Change of Use of land to equestrian and erection of detached building comprising of a stable, tackroom and storage. Installation of concrete base for parking.

It was noted that there was one public comment, not an objection, posted on the NHC website.

It was resolved that there were no objections and a recommendation for approval be sent to the Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

80.1.3 No.39 Station Road NHC ref. 21/03540/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Extend existing dropped kerb along part of the front of 39 Station Road onto the highway.

It was resolved that there were no objections and a recommendation for approval be sent to the Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

80.1.4 No.4 Philosophers Gate NHC ref. 22/00118/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Erection of front elevation porch canopy, replace existing front elevation window with a bay window and single storey rear extension.

It was noted that there was one public comment, not an objection, posted on the NHC website.

It was resolved that there were no objections and a recommendation for approval be sent to the Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

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

80.2.1 Land Adjacent To 28, Hodwell. NHC ref. 22/00098/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T11 Sycamore - Remove (one in a group of 4 trees has died, remove trunk for safety).

80.2.2 No.28 Hodwell. NHC ref. 22/00081/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): Various Tree works (none for removal). NHC ref. 22/00226/TCA

80.2.3 No.43 Back Street. NHC ref. 22/00231/TCA. Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Prunus - Remove diseased stem and reduce remaining crown by up to 3m back to good growth points where possible.

It was resolved that there were no objections to items 80.2.1, 80.2.2, 80.2.3 and this be conveyed to the Planning Officer.

Action: Deputy Clerk

80.2.4 No.9 Springhead. NHC ref. 22/00232/TCA

Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Conifer - Fell to ground level. T2 Ash - Remove the 3 lowest limbs.

Concerns were raised that no clear reason for the felling of the tree had been given.

It was resolved that no objections would be raised but the Planning Officer be requested to require that at least one, and preferably two, replacement trees be planted that were native species more suited to the location.

Action: Deputy Clerk

80.2.5 The Parish Council's application was noted for:

Ashwell Cemetery, Station Road. NHC ref. 22/00226/TCA. Various tree works as per survey.

80.2.6 The Parish Council's application was noted for:

Ashwell Springs, Springhead. NHC ref. 22/00225/TCA. Various tree works including removal as per survey.

80.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing.

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

New section of footway to be installed as a condition of the planning permission. Concern was again raised that nearly all of the houses had now been sold and the requirement of the planning condition had thus not been adhered to. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Head of Planning at NHC to request why this was and when the footway would be completed.

Action: Clerk

80.3.2 Claybush Hill Meadow (NHC ref. 16/01797/1)

Requests had been made to the NHC Planning Officer by District Cllr Tom Tyson re the compliance with the conditions for the installation of bird boxes. Chairman Graham Lee reported that these had been installed but in locations different to what had been marked on the plans.

80.3.3 Two new houses on land west of 35 Ashwell Street/Request from the NHC street-naming officer. It was noted that permission for the two new houses to the east of no. 35 was still pending. It had been ascertained that if given a new road name, this would have a unique post code. A preference had been expressed that they be given house names and 'Ashwell Street' be included in their addresses.

Action: Clerk/Graham

81 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

81.1 Monthly summary of accounts. These were approved for signature.

Action: Graham/Martin/Clerk

Meeting closed at 22.30

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 2nd March 2022

Annual Parish Meeting -Wednesday 23rd March, 8pm, at the school

APPENDICES - FOR INFORMATION

Appendix A: Parish Council actions ongoing.

- (i) Liaison with HCC/Herts Highways through our County Cllr Steve Jarvis including
 - site visit re proposals for safety improvements at the War Memorial junction
 - overhanging vegetation in Mill Street
 - new yellow lines in Silver Street
 - damage to the bike racks in the High Street
- (ii) Liaison with our PCSO's
 - Speeding concerns
 - Dog control concerns
- (iii) Liaison with NHC through our District Cllr Tom Tyson including
 - Dog fouling concerns
 - Enforcement of restricted parking spaces

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

- (i) Tree works recommended in the professional surveys for the Springs and the Cemetery now scheduled. Date for works in St Mary's Churchyard pending.
- (ii) Fire safety checks on all premises completed.
- (iii) Pavilion and public toilets
 - Winter freezing prevention measures ongoing
 - Plumbing and carpentry repairs in the Gents toilets completed.

Appendix C: Summary of recent planning consultations from NHC up to 7th February 2022

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
4 Philosophers Gate	22/00118/FPH	Erection of front elevation porch canopy, replace existing front elevation window with a bay window and single storey rear extension.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land Adj to Ashridge Farm, Ashwell Street <i>(this is at the Tennis Club site)</i>	22/00027/FP	Erection of wooden structure with a veranda for use as a clubhouse and storage for the tennis club and erection of additional fencing	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Ashwell End Farm, Loves Lane	22/00013/FP	Change of Use of land to equestrian and erection of detached building comprising of a stable, tackroom and storage. Installation of concrete base for parking	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
39 Station Road	21/03540/FPH	extend existing dropped kerb along part of the front of 39 Station Road onto the highway	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land Opposite 67 Station Road	21/02803/FP	Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling	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	Pending

Appendix D: Summary of accounts for 01/01/22 to 31/01/2022

	RECEIPTS				£
80	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (January)			68.75
81	Paul Norman Painter & Decorator	Advert for Yearbook 2022			40.00
82	Santander	Reserve Account interest			0.18
				Total	£108.93
	PAYMENTS		£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
189	Dan Horne	maintenance work at the pavilion	105.00		105.00
190	Wave	Sewerage charges-Pavilion 1/7/2020-15/6/2021	133.06		133.06
191	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee January	25.00	5.00	30.00
192	Austin Tree Care	Ivy removal at Small Gains	150.00	30.00	180.00
193	Austin Tree Care	Tree planting on the Recreation Ground	1245.67	249.13	1,494.80
194	ICO	Annual Registration Fee	35.00		35.00
195	Edward's Cleaning & Maint Services	Toilet Cleaning & Consumables Inv no 2345	180.00		180.00
196	North Herts Council	Recreation Ground trade waste bin	106.34		106.34
197	North Herts Council	Streets Support trade waste bin	119.73		119.73
198	North Herts Council	Springs trade waste bin	119.73		119.73
199	Wave	Sewerage charges-Pavilion 1/7/2020-15/6/2021	202.06		202.06
200	EON Next	Electricity for Public Toilets for December	13.57	0.68	14.25
201	CPRE	Annual Subscription	36.00		36.00
202	HMRC	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	525.59		525.59
203	HCC Pensions	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	740.66		740.66
204	Austin Tree Care	Hedge & Tree planting on the Recreation Ground	125.00	25.00	150.00
205	Clerk	Salary	1371.50		1,371.50
206	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	850.71		850.71
207	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	236.80		236.80
208	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	153.60		153.60
209	T & J Fire & Security	Fire Inspec & Maint, Pavilion, Office & Lock-Up	118.94	23.80	142.74
			TOTAL	£6,593.96	£333.61
					£6,927.57
	MONEY AT BANK				
		Current Account 31/01/2022	£65,138.48		
		Reserve Account 31/01/2022	£20,704.10		