

Minutes

of the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 5th January 2022

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.

68. Apologies for absence were noted and approved. None.

69. Declarations of Interest. None.

70. Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on Wednesday 1st December 2021. This was approved. **Action: Graham/Clerk**

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

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

71.1 Items from members of the public.

71.1.1 War Memorial centenary. A representative of the Ashwell branch of the Royal British Legion reported that the rededication event held on Saturday 4th December had been attended by 45 to 50 people; refreshments had been served in the pavilion afterwards. In 2022 the 100th anniversary of the local branch was to be celebrated with a meal at the Bushel & Strike on 24th March; all were welcome.

71.1.2 Telegraph poles in Hodwell. Following an alert from a parishioner to a notice placed near the Lock Up, the Parish Council asked District Councillor Tom Tyson to investigate. He had determined that an application had been made to NHDC, and granted, for two new telegraph poles. All details were on the NHDC website.

See <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/view-or-comment-planning-application>
Planning ref. 21/03366/EC

71.1.3 Flow rates at the Springs. It was noted that this had been the subject of posts on Ashwell Hub and Cllr Gemma Allan had posted a full response.

See report from Cllr Martin Hoffman item 72.1.2 below.

71.1.4 Co-options to the Parish Council. *See also December Council minute 64.1.5.*

In response to a request for an update on progress Chairman Graham Lee reported. The list of names of potential candidates that had been supplied by the parishioner had been circulated to parish councillors with a request that they add their own suggestions. Individuals would now be contacted to see if they were interested in putting themselves forward.

71.2 North Herts District Council (NHDC).

District Councillor Tom Tyson reported.

71.2.1 Update on the proposed Bygrave solar farm. No planning application had yet been made. The meeting organised by Bygrave Parish Council had included an exhibition by the developer of their currently proposed plans. A further meeting, also organised by Bygrave Parish Council, was to be held at St Mary's Church Hall in Baldock. All were welcome to attend.

See <http://www.bygraveparishcouncil.org.uk/>

71.2.2 Enforcement of restricted parking spaces. Following a request from the Parish Council the NHDC officer would be asked to attend with particular emphasis on the regular offender outside the Pharmacy and the yellow lines in the vicinity of the school. It was emphasised that the issue of tickets was necessary to make the restrictions effective.

71.2.3 New trees planted in Dixies Close. These were 'looking good' and all involved were commended.

71.2.4 Community Governance Review/Update on the possible reduction in the number of elected parish councillor positions for Ashwell. Further investigation had determined that the required procedures were currently further complicated by recently agreed changes to the District Council's electoral cycle. All district members would be elected every four years; this would be fully implemented in 2024. Elections for Arbury Ward (his own seat on the District Council) and Ashwell Parish Council were due in 2023 but, assuming the district and parish were aligned, there would be further elections in 2024.

71.2.5 Damaged wall at Chalk Bank Close. Chairman Graham Lee reported that this second wall damaged by the waste/recycling contractor's vehicle had now been repaired but the street name sign had not been replaced. District Councillor Tom Tyson agreed to chase this up with the NHDC officer responsible.

See also item 73 re Planning.

71.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported.

71.3.1 Highways contractors' response issues. In response to a question from Cllr Martin Hoffman, he agreed that the works carried out were often not up to standard. He continued to address this issue and to chase up individual cases, such as the overhanging vegetation at the Mill Street/Fordham Close junction where no effective action had been taken. Cllr Hoffman thanked him for being 'on the case'.

71.3.2 West End chicane. He had received the final set of drawings just before Christmas and would circulate these. No date for installation had yet been fixed.

71.3.3 New yellow lines. The painting of these in Silver Street was pending dry weather and an absence of parked cars. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that a car with a notice identifying it as having been seized by bailiffs was blocking the area. District Cllr Tom Tyson agreed to report this to relevant officers at NHDC as this came within their responsibility.

71.3.4 Footway resurfacing. The section from the Station Road chicane to Sunnymead Orchard was scheduled for much-needed repairs.

71.3.5 A505 speed monitoring. Following his request data now collected showed excessive speeds either side of the Odsey junction. However, Highways officers deemed these to be 'too high' to be addressed by engineering methods and were a matter for police enforcement. He regarded this as 'entirely ridiculous'. A parishioner raised her concerns

about the poor state of the road surface. He agreed that the monitoring by the contractor was poor and he had chased this.

Other HCC/Highways matters.

71.3.6 Three new trees in Silver Street. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that most residents were pleased with the new planting to replace the lost Ash tree but a few had raised concerns that the trees would grow too large and block their views of the Church. A suggestion had been made that the Parish Council take on the responsibility for their maintenance and it was agreed that this be investigated.

71.3.7 Proposal to restrict vehicular access along the Ruddy. Chairman Graham Lee reported on correspondence with the resident who had earlier suffered an injury due to dangerous driving. She had been reassured that both the Parish Council and County Councillor Steve Jarvis were chasing the matter with the rights of way officer.

71.4 Items from parish councillors

See further below for premises reports.

71.4.1 Code of Conduct complaint to NHDC. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the complaint from a parishioner had been considered by the NHDC Monitoring Officer and rejected on the grounds that there was no basis for the complaint.

71.4.2 Village Hall. Chairman Graham Lee reported on communications with the clerk to the Village Hall re their preferred options to change their status to an Incorporated Charity and the future involvement of the Parish Council. Parishioner Alan Munns provided further information and was commended for all his input on the matter. It was agreed that once the trustees and the management group of the Village Hall had agreed the details for making it an Incorporated Charity, then the future role of the Parish Council could be considered and a decision made. It was noted that the reason that the Parish Council was involved in this first stage was that it had agreed to fund the costs of the solicitor.

71.5 WORKING GROUP REPORTS

71.5.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). Graham Lee reported that the NHDC cabinet had approved the plan at its December meeting. The likely date for the village referendum was 3rd March and the working group would consider publicity for this. He commended the marvellous work done by David Short and others who had started the process and to all those involved in getting it to this stage particularly Norton Mahy. This included a paid consultant whose input had been essential.

71.5.2 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported that two trees and a line of new hedging at the Rec and additional trees at Small Gains were to be planted this week. The bid for funding from the Queen's Green Canopy had been successful so some further planting would be planned.

71.5.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr Norton Mahy). Norton Mahy reported that all was good for the 2022 edition and distribution planned for March 5/6th.

71.5.4 Conservation Area Review Group (leader David Short). Nothing further to report as pending information from NHDC.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated from here.

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

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

72.1 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported.

72.1.1 Site visit and report by the Countryside Management Service. This had taken place just before Christmas and had been useful. Plans for new bins and fencing works would now be progressed. It was envisaged that most maintenance tasks would continue to be undertaken by volunteers.

72.1.2 Flow rate concerns. *See also 71.1.3 above.* Contact had been made with the Environment Agency (EA), the authority responsible for monitoring and maintaining the flows in line with the statutory requirements of the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). The EA monitors the flows daily and also sends the data to the Parish Council on a monthly basis. Following the recent enquiry the EA responded promptly and assured that the flow rates recorded by their monitoring gauge, and hence the water levels, were within the satisfactory range. The flow rates were a combination of the rainfall onto the chalk scarp (with a three-month percolation delay) and the extraction by the water company under its license. If enhancement is required the EA turns on a transfer pump based out at Redlands to ensure that the flows at the Springs are maintained. This protects the unique ice-age flatworms that are the reason for the SSSI status. The EA had commended the Parish Council and local residents for their interest and input.

72.2 The Rec and playground. Cllr Gemma Allan reported.

The bid to the Henry Colbron Trust to fund a refurbishment and some new equipment aimed particularly at older children had been successful. She also thanked County Cllr Steve Jarvis for his contribution. As this would be a significant expenditure further consultation with stakeholders would be undertaken before plans were finalised and progressed. She was minded to seek volunteer input from outside the Parish Council to help progress this.

73. PLANNING MATTERS

73.1 New consultations received from NHDC.

73.1.1 No.13 Dixies Close. NHDC ref. 21/03386/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Single storey side and rear extension following demolition of existing detached side elevation outbuilding. Formation of dropped kerb to the highway.

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

A proposal was made that no objections be raised but that the proposed new driveway should be constructed with permeable materials.

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

Action: Deputy Clerk

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

73.2.1 No. 7 Silver Street. NHDC ref. 21/03345/TCA

Silver birch - Crown reduce to previous points to up to 2m. All pruning to viable growth points.

73.2.2 No. 89 Back Street. NHDC ref. 21/03288/TCA

Chestnut -Crown reduce by up to 3m.

73.2.3 No. 1 Westbury Barns. NHDC ref 21/03387/TCA

Cut down small dead Lawson conifer (about 6 foot tall).

73.2.4 No. 1 Westbury Barns. NHDC ref 21/03388/TCA
Beech: Trim 2-3 branches less than 1ft.

72.2.5 Westbury Farm House. NHDC ref. 21/03254/TCA
Sycamore - Reduce by approx. 25-30% to suitable growth points.

A proposal was made that no objections be raised to the items 73.2.1 to 73.2.5 above as they involved management as opposed to felling.

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

Action: Deputy Clerk

72.2.6 The Three Tuns, High Street. NHDC ref. 21/03495/TCA

Sycamore - Fell to ground level due to structural damage to adjacent property.

It was noted that a previous application to fell this tree has been refused by the NHDC Planning Officer. However, it was understood that following a site visit by the Planning Officer and the NHDC Tree Officer a spokesman for the brewery (the tree owner and applicant) had informed of the reason, this being the concerns of the neighbouring householder that the tree was causing structural damage to their property. This second application had now been submitted including the wording 'Fell to ground level due to structural damage to adjacent property'.

Concerns were expressed that no evidence for this claim had been included in the details of the application on the NHDC website. It was queried whether any evidence had been submitted to the Planning Officer by the applicant or whether this had been based on an expert opinion provided by the NHDC Tree Officer.

On the basis that the felling of the tree had been justified by expert opinion it was agreed to propose that no objection be made. It was also agreed that as a matter of course claims such as this should be justified by evidence provided by the applicant and placed in the public domain with an application.

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

Action: Deputy Clerk

73.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing:

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

New section of footway to be installed as a condition of the planning permission.

Nothing further to report. Chairman Graham Lee noted that this was still outstanding despite the ongoing sale of the properties. District Cllr Tom Tyson and County Cllr Steve Jarvis were requested to chase this up.

74. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

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

Action: Graham/Martin/Clerk

Meeting closed at 21.25

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 2nd February 2022

APPENDICES – FOR INFORMATION

Appendix A: Parish Council actions ongoing.

(i) Liaison with **HCC/Herts Highways** through our County Cllr Steve Jarvis including

- proposals for safety improvements at the War Memorial junction,
- review of footway surfaces in the High Street,
- overhanging vegetation in Mill Street and the High Street to Silver Street twitchel (latter works now completed).

(ii) Liaison with NHDC re the installation of a **satellite dish in the conservation area**.

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.

Appendix C: Summary of recent NHDC Planning Application consultations and their status as of 5th January 2022.

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
13 Dixies Close	21/03386/FPH	Single Storey side and rear extension following demolition of existing detached side elevation outbuilding. Formation of dropped kerb to the highway.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
12 Newnham Way	21/03101/FPH	Single Storey Rear extension, undercroft storage area & reworking of existing patio to include additional sidesteps	PC to NHDC: No objection	Permission Granted on 17th December 2021
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
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: No Objection	Permission granted on 7th December 2021

Appendix D: Monthly accounts summary for December 2021

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st December to 31st December							
RECEIPTS					£		
74	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (Nov)			68.75		
75	James Pepper Memorial Services	Headstone fee for CW 21.29			140.00		
76	Arnold Funeral Services	Ashes Interment for CW21.30			230.00		
77	Bluegates Farm	Rent for cemetery ground space			0.05		
78	Henry Colbron Trust	Grant for Playground refurbishment			32095.48		
79	Santander	Reserve Account interest			0.17		
				Total	32,534.45		
PAYMENTS					£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
176	Castle Water	Water invoice for Cemetery Oct 21- Mar 22	46.24			46.24	
177	Castle Water	Water invoice for Small Gains Oct 21- Mar 22	132.72			132.72	
178	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Dec)	25.00	5.00		30.00	
179	Alison Eardley	Neighbourhood Plan Consultant	400.00	80.00		480.00	
180	Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services	Toilet Cleaning & Consumables Inv no 2334	225.00			225.00	
181	David Sims	reimbursement for Small Gains Padlocks	27.98			27.98	
182	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	740.66			740.66	
183	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	529.99			529.99	
184	EON Next	Electricity for Public Toilets November	13.14	0.66		13.80	
185	Clerk	Salary	1371.50			1,371.50	
186	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	850.91			850.91	
187	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	236.80			236.80	
188	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	171.00			171.00	
		TOTAL	4,770.94	85.66		4,856.60	
MONEY AT BANK							
		Current Account 31/12/2021	£71,957.30				
		Reserve Account 31/12/2021	£20,703.92				

Signed

Date