

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting  
held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019 in the Parish Room**

**Present:** Cllrs Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman and Chairman for this meeting), Gemma Allan, Norton Mahy, Graham Lee, David Sims.

The Clerk (Jane Porter) and the Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne) were also in attendance.

Members of the public: Four parishioners, District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

**10. Apologies for absence.** Cllr Mark White, Chairman (away).

**11. Declarations of Interest.** None.

**12. Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting.**

It was *resolved* that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019 be accepted and signed.

**13. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM**

*Standing Orders suspended (members of the public permitted to speak if they wish).*

**14. Village Hall.** Transfer to the Parish Council of the holding (or custodian) trusteeship. (*see February Council 2018, minute 98.1 for details*). Cllr Martin Hoffman gave an update; the Village Hall Management Committee had formally approved the transfer at their recent AGM, the solicitor recommended by ACRE had been appointed and the costs of this would be covered by funds held by the existing holding trustees and the Management Committee.

**15. Items raised by parish councillors** (*including any matters on other village groups and organisations*).

**15.1 Museum.** Cllr Martin Hoffman (Chairman of the Museum trustees in his own right) reported that the funding-raising for essential building works had gone extremely well and works were scheduled to start in the coming week. He applauded the ‘tremendous support’ from the whole village.

**15.2 Arbury Banks.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a further update had been received from the organisers of the Chilterns Beacons of the Past project. The data specific to Ashwell was still undergoing interpretation but publication was expected shortly.

**16. Matters re other authorities and organisations.**

**16.1 North Herts District Council (NHDC).** Cllr Martin Hoffman welcomed the new District Councillor Tom Tyson and thanked him for his attendance.

**16.2 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)/Highways.**

County Councillor Steve Jarvis gave updates on the following: (i) 20mph zone. Additional measurements to extend the proposed zone at West End had been taken. (ii) Yellow lines. Installation was pending issues with the contractor; this would be chased up. (iii) Weedkilling. Parishioners had raised concerns about the chemical used; this had been clarified and assurances given. Discussions were ongoing as to a more ecologically sound approach to avoid killing valued plants. (iv) A505 safety improvements. Nothing further to report and discussions were still ongoing. (v) Station Road safety improvements for pedestrians. Revisions to the initial design proposals were ongoing, and funding for additional footways and a crossing point had been requested from section 106 funds held. (vi) West End safety. Design work had been started.

Following a request from Cllr Martin Hoffman Cllr Jarvis agreed to investigate the loss of the railings adjacent to the bridge on the Newnham Road.

Councillor Jarvis reported that the timetable of the 202 taxi-bus service to the station had been altered following minor changes to the rail timetable.

**17. Working Groups.**

**17.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group** Cllr Graham Lee reported that the next meeting of the group had had to be rescheduled; the position of group leader was to be discussed.

**17.2 Yearbook Group** Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he would attend the next meeting of the group on 11<sup>th</sup> June and report back.

**17.3 Local business support** Cllr Graham Lee reported that the main focus at present was on the village map (*see 19.1 below*).

**17.4 Litter Pick Group.** Cllr Martin Hoffman noted that no further action was planned until the annual event next March and queried whether anything could be organised prior to that.

**17.5 Village Sports Day.** It was reported that this had been a ‘roaring success’.

**17.6 Protection of valued trees.** It was reported that the request to NHDC for Tree Preservation Orders to be placed on a number of trees at land on the junction of Station Road and Ashwell Street (the Ruddery) had been acknowledged and passed to their Landscape Officer.

**18. Items raised by parishioners.**

**18.1** Following a request it was agreed that a further, more strongly worded letter, be sent to the resident of Claybush Road re the vegetation overhanging the verge that was restricting sight-lines.

**Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

**18.2** Safety concerns, particularly for pedestrians, were raised in connection with the NHDC waste contractor’s vehicles. On regular occasions lorries were seen to reverse at the junction of Ashwell Street and Claybush Road by the rear entrance to the school. Sometimes this was in one direction, sometimes another but both were considered to be hazardous. It was agreed that this would be taken up with NHDC.

**Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

*Standing Orders reinstated (members of the public no longer permitted to speak).*

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**19. Matters of report from previous meetings.**

**19.1 New village map.** Cllr Graham Lee reported that he and the Deputy Clerk were working with the supplier on the design. Contact with the Museum re the inclusion of photographic images from their archives was ongoing.

**Action: GEL/Deputy Clerk**

**19.2 Website.** Cllr Graham Lee reported that it was working well and additional material would continue to be added.

**Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

**19.3 Village entrance sign/Ashwell 1100.** It was reported that the new sign for Station Road had been delivered from the supplier and would now be installed by Herts Highways; the cost of this was agreed.

**Action: Deputy Clerk**

**19.4 Letters to Sir Oliver Heald, MP, from Year 6 children at the school following their visit to Parliament.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a visit to the school by former parish councillors David Short and Madeleine Legg had been scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> June to provide feedback on matters that related to the Parish Council. Sir Oliver would be kept updated.

**Action: Clerk**

**20. Premises management reports from councillors.**

**20.1 Cemetery.** It was reported that the new tenancy agreement for the Chapel of Rest had been completed.

**20.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion**

(Cllrs responsible: Mark White and Gemma Allan)

Cllr Gemma Allan reported that she was to form a consultation group of interested parties including relevant aged children and parents to inform development proposals for the whole area and would report back following discussions. It was likely that a bid for funding would be made to the Henry Colbron Trust.

**20.3 Playground** (Cllr responsible: Gemma Allan) *See 20.2 above.*

**20.4 Public Toilets** (Cllr responsible: Gemma Allan) Cllr Gemma Allan reported that a meeting with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had been scheduled to consider the information that had been gathered so far re the proposal for new toilet facilities.

**20.5 The Springs** (Cllr responsible: Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he would undertake the next regular site inspection on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. No volunteer working parties would be scheduled until the autumn/winter season.

**20.6 Small Gains** (Allotments, liaison with the Accies re the sports field and shared car parking area)

(Cllr responsible: David Sims)

Cllr David Sims updated on the recent escalation of problems including vandalism to fences, damage to the pitches by vehicles, litter and drug-taking. The police had been informed and he was scheduled to discuss the situation further with the PCSO. Damage to the allotments caused by casual footballers also continued to be a problem; the Accies had again been requested to move and secure the goals in a location away from the allotments to help prevent this. It was agreed that options to increase security, including a gate across the lane, be discussed again with interested parties.

**20.7 The Lock Up** Cllr Norton Mahy agreed to take on the responsibility for this. A refurbishment of the information sign would be investigated.

**20.8 Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond** (Cllr responsible: Martin Hoffman)

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that repairs to the seat on Carters' Pond were in hand.

**20.9 Street furniture.** It was noted that routine renovation of the notice boards and seats would commence over the summer months.

**20.10 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance.** (Cllr responsible: Martin Hoffman)

Nothing to report.

**20.11 Parish Clock.** (Cllr responsible: Mark White) Nothing to report.

**20.12 War Memorial.** It was reported that frequent watering of the new hedging was ongoing. It was agreed to repeat the request that the water company replace the heavy concrete meter cover so that regular usage readings could be taken. This would be taken up with Ofwat if needed. It was noted that the Cricket Club was using a significant amount of water on the square.

**20.13 Grounds maintenance.** Nothing to report.

## **21. Planning matters.**

*Details of applications are sent from NHDC to the Parish Council as a consultee.*

*Plans are available on [www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk).*

See appendix below for a summary of recent consultations.

**21.1 New consultations on applications received from NHDC.** None.

**21.2 Development at the former Cooke Engineering site.** It was agreed that a further site visit be made to assess the latest situation re the concerns previously expressed (*see minutes May 1<sup>st</sup> Council, 143.4*). Outstanding concerns would again be forwarded to the developer and all relevant authorities with illustrative photos.

**Action: Clerk**

**21.3 Proposed development land at Station Road. NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01406/1.**

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a letter had been received from the developer requesting the Parish Council's views on a revised version of the plans. These were for nine houses on part of the land; there would be no sports or community facilities included.

Concerns were raised that the policy of the Parish Council had been not to discuss proposals with a developer at the pre-application stage. This was to avoid any confusion, or suggestion of pre-determination or bias, prior to any formal consultation from NHDC on a planning application. Receipt of information would be acceptable but no formal expression of the Parish Council's views would be given. However, as had been stated in the previous response to this developer, the Parish Council would request that it be kept informed by them on proposals for the site.

It was again noted that the site was outside the village settlement boundary. Without any inclusion of facilities for community benefit, whereby an exception might be made, the proposals were unlikely to be granted permission by NHDC.

It was again noted that the sports clubs that might potentially benefit from new facilities had shown no enthusiasm for the earlier planning application that had included all-weather pitches and a pavilion.

It was noted that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan was in principle in favour of small developments of less than ten houses. Concerns were expressed that an application for nine houses on part of the land might be followed by further applications in the future.

It was **resolved** to respond to the developer that the Parish Council did not wish to formally comment on their latest proposal. The site was outside the settlement boundary and with no element of community benefit the proposals were unlikely to be supported and permission granted.

**Action: Clerk**

**21.4 Car parking at the Ashwell & Morden Station in Odsey.** (*see minutes May 1<sup>st</sup> Council, 139.4.1*).

Nothing further to report.

**21.5 Hunts Close, field off Ashwell Street.** (*see minutes May 1<sup>st</sup> Council, 139.4.11*).

Nothing further to report.

## **22. Finance and governance matters.**

**22.1 Proposal for approval of the monthly summary of accounts for May** (see appendix below).

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

**22.2 Annual Audit for the financial year 2018-19.**

The procedures and schedule for the audit were again noted.

**22.2.1** Internal Audit report. It was noted that the Internal Auditor had completed his report and had signed the relevant section of the Annual Return; there had been no issues raised. The completed Internal Audit Programme was also noted.

**22.2.2** Proposal to approve Section 1/Annual Governance Statement.

Cllr Martin Hoffman proposed that this be approved and signed; the proposal was seconded.

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

**22.2.3** Proposal to approve Section 2/Accounting Statements and to note the basic documents to accompany the Annual Return to the External Auditor (Bank Reconciliation, Explanation of significant variances, Notice of the period of public rights).

Cllr Martin Hoffman proposed that this be approved and signed and the documents noted; the proposal was seconded.

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

**22.2.4** The additional documents required to be submitted to the External Auditor as Ashwell had been randomly selected to be one of the 5% of councils for intermediate review were noted. Documents to be submitted included evidence in support of the council's latest review of its risk assessment policy. This had been undertaken at the March 2019 Council meeting.

**22.2.5** The External Audit submission date (by 30<sup>th</sup> June) and the Publication Requirement dates were noted, ie

(i) Before 1<sup>st</sup> July; the Notice of the period of public rights and the publication of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (notice board and website) and, (ii) No later than 30<sup>th</sup> September, the Notice of the conclusion of audit and Section 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

**Action: Clerk**

**23. Employment matters** (Cllrs responsible: Chairman and Cllr Graham Lee)

Cllr Graham Lee reported that a meeting with himself and the Chairman was pending.

**Meeting closed 9.35pm.**

**Forthcoming meeting dates:**

July Council meeting, Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, 8pm in the Parish Room.

**Appendix 1 – General material received**

NHDC weekly 'Members Information'; HAPTC briefings and bulletins; SLCC updates and newsletters; Police OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust newsletters.

**Appendix 2 - Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHDC - as at 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments (as consultee)	North Herts Decision (as the planning authority)
1 Forrester Cottages, 14 High Street	19/00638/LBC	Replace ground floor white painted single glazed softwood windows and doors at rear and side of house with white painted double glazed windows.	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Permission granted
Land Jct of Ashwell St & Station Rd	19/00455/FP	Erection of 9 (6 No. Three Bedroom, 3 No. Four bedroom) dwellings with associated parking, amenity space and associated ancillary works, following demolition of existing redundant structures. Creation of new access from Station Road.	Planning Committee Wed 3rd April. PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be REFUSED	Pending
43 Dixies Close	19/00399/FPH	Two storey side extension, single storey front porch extension with extended canopy.	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Permission granted
Land rear of 4-14 Claybush Road	16/01797/1	30 proposed dwellings with associated access, parking, amenity & open space.	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be REFUSED	Pending

### Appendix 3 - Monthly accounts summary

<b>ACCOUNTS - Summary 1st to 31st May 2019</b>			
<b>RECEIPTS</b>			£
26	EW Pepper (Arington Garden Centre)	Advert fee payment for 2019 yearbook advert	125.00
27	Tenant	Allotment payment plot number 6	20.00
28	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (May)	68.75
29	Mick Huggins	Advert fee payment for 2019 yearbook advert	125.00
30	Tenant	Allotment payment plot number 12	20.00
31	Accies Football Club	2019-20 rent	860.00
32	Tenant	Allotment payment plot number 8a	10.00
33	Tenant	Allotment payment plot number 3	20.00
34	Henry Harris Funfair	Payment for the fair for Ashwell at Home	350.00
35	Santander interest account	Interest 01/05/2019	5.93
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,604.68</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
27	EON	Electricity for Pavilion Toilets (5/5/19)	8.10
28	EON	Electricity for Pavilion (Invoice 12/5/19)	21.80
29	EON	Electricity for Pavilion (Invoice 14/4/19)	34.72
30	NHDC	Trade Waste Collection Bear Farm Office (Invoice 01/04/2019)	110.50
31	BT	Phone and broadband (inc line and a/c changes)	61.17
32	Clerk	Clerk's salary	1,280.09
33	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk's Salary	785.88
34	HCC Pensions -LGPS Account,	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension	708.74
35	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	165.20
36	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	225.60
37	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	399.57
38	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 46	444.00
39	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 47	510.00
40	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 48	150.00
41	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 49	540.00
42	The Blue Tree Company	New hedging at War Memorial	3,307.20
43	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (May)	30.00
44	Herts County Council	Penalty Charge for late payemnt for pension	50.00
45	Herts & Middlesex	Annual membership	40.00
46	Ashwell Housing Association	Rental for office May-Oct 2019	450.00
47	MCL Communications	Annual Website Hosting	144.00
48	Arena Stationers	Office stationery supplies	58.39
49	Alpha Signs	Village Entrance Sign 'Ashwell'	1,413.60
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>10,938.56</b>
<b>MONEY AT BANK</b>			
			Current Account 31/5/2019
			<b>£32,395.46</b>
			Reserve Account 31/5/2019
			<b>£20,615.12</b>