

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting  
held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in the Parish Room**

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

The Clerk (Jane Porter) and Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne) were in attendance. Others present: Two members of the public and District Councillor Tom Tyson.

County Councillor Steve Jarvis had sent his apologies.

**116.** Apologies for absence. None.

**117.** Declarations of Interest. Item, 122.3 Cllr Graham Lee (resident of Ashwell Street).

**118.** Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

It was *resolved* that these be approved and signed.

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

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

**119.1 New pavilion project/replacement** of the existing pavilion at the Recreation Ground with enhanced facilities for sports and community use. The Chairman and Cllr Gemma Allan gave an update. Good progress was being made although the project was still in the early stages.

**119.2 Ashwell and Morden Station (South Cambridgeshire)/proposals** by the local landowner (Mr Jeremy Fordham of Odsey Properties Ltd) for a car park, footways and housing development near the station; this to include an improved footway/cycleway with Ashwell. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that no further information had been received re any planning application to South Cambridgeshire Council. The local cyclists group had been updated. County Councillor Steve Jarvis and District Councillor Tom Tyson were working on proposals for improvements on the Hertfordshire side.

**119.3 Village hall/transfer** to the Parish Council of the holding (or custodian) trusteeship. The Chairman reported that the new solicitor had been briefed.

**119.4 Henry Colbron Trust/future use** of the now disused school netball courts off Gardiners Lane. Cllr Gemma Allan reported that there had been two applications to the trustees, the Merchant Taylors' Company, from village groups with proposals for new use. Both had been rejected by the trustees. It was agreed that the trustees be requested to give reasons for this and what their intentions now were for the site.

**Action: Clerk**

*See also 123.2 re the Recreation Ground.*

**119.5 Post Office service hosted by St Mary's Church in the Parish Room.** Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that a request had been received from St Mary's PCC for financial support as their General Fund, that included the Parish Room, was running at a deficit. The service in the Parish Room was currently supported by the Church at nil rent as outreach post office services would be financially unviable without such support. Cllr Martin Hoffman quoted figures re the Parish Clock and the grounds maintenance of the Churchyard currently paid for by Parish Council through the parish precept (Clock - £6600 in 2017, £210 in 2018, £1200 in 2019. Grounds - £5400 in 2017, £6400 in 2018, £6700 in 2019). Following discussion it was agreed that the Post Office in the Parish Room was an important community service and £1000 would be offered to the Church in the financial year 2020-21. The situation would be reviewed when setting the budget for the following year and economies in expenditure on other areas considered to offset any future costs.

**Action: Clerk**

**119.6 Items raised by parishioners.**

**119.6.1 Greening Ashwell group.** The Chairman reported on communications with parishioner Ken Coyne who was leading on this village initiative to enhance/add green spaces. A successful first meeting had been held and he was commended on the enthusiasm he had generated. See 122.4 below re the planting project for the HCC verge adjacent to the new houses on the old Cooke Engineering works.

**119.6.2 Climate Change – Ashwell Climate Conversations group.** The Chairman reported on communications with parishioner Barbara Lohoar who was leading on this village initiative to 'facilitate the development of awareness, interest and action in our community to combat climate issues'. The group were intending to distribute a leaflet and to hold village meetings. They had requested that the Parish Council, (i) permit them to have a table outside the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) to promote their group's activities,

(ii) add a section to the Parish Council minutes where their activities could be reported, (iii) declare a 'Climate Emergency' in support of the group's objectives.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would not wish to associate itself with a group that was involved in any disruptive or potentially aggressive actions such as Extinction Rebellion and reassurances on this would be sought.

Following discussion it was agreed that there were no objections to a table outside the APM so long as it was made clear that this was for an independent group and not the Parish Council. It was noted that minutes already included any reports from village groups/organisations.

Re the Climate Emergency declaration, the Chairman reported that he had looked through the information on the NHDC website following their pledge; District Councillor Tom Tyson was asked for his guidance on this. Parish councillors expressed some concern at the use of the word 'emergency' and whether this reflected the reality of the Parish Council's ability to act. It was acknowledged that this terminology was deliberately, and widely, used to attract attention and encourage action. It was agreed that many of the items on the NHDC's action lists were only relevant to a district council. However, many of those that were relevant to the Parish Council were already being done, eg energy efficiency of the proposed new pavilion, plans for a drinking fountain at the Rec, tree planting, etc. Other items, eg 'support and engage with local community groups' could be done.

Following discussion it was proposed that wording from the District Council's information be used. The Parish Council would agree to declare a Climate Emergency and as such would pledge to do everything within its powers to tackle Climate Change and would commit to considering this in all its actions and would encourage others to do so.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Action: Clerk**

**119.6.3** Parishioner Janice Willis, the organiser of the village Facebook page re Neighbourhood Watch reported:

(i) Crime Prevention Day to be organised by PCSO Chris Brabrook. The Chairman reported that he was aware that the room hire charge requested by the Church for use of the Parish Room by the police had been problematic and had offered that the Parish Council would fund this as a community service.

(ii) Speedwatch. There was interest in getting this initiative restarted in the village. Cllr Martin Hoffman gave information from his experience of leading a group over some years. It was agreed that restarting this would be excellent.

### **119.7 Items raised by parish councillors.**

The Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 8pm at the School was noted.

### **119.8 Matters re other authorities and organisations/reports and updates.**

#### **119.8.1 North Herts District Council (NHDC)**

District Councillor Tom Tyson reported:

(i) Character Assessment/Review of the Ashwell Conservation Area. Following the concerns raised re the factual errors and omissions he had taken this up with the Service Director who had responded. This was a document intended to inform future decisions by planning officers; the suggested amendments had been forwarded to the consultant who had written it for comment. (ii) Area Committee grants. Following changes some concern had been expressed re parish applications competing with local charities and community groups. It was noted that Ashwell Parish Council had always had a policy of not competing for these grants. (iii) Replacement of the dead tree in Dixies Close. He had been informed that, in line with policy, two replacement trees would be planted.

*See also item 119.10.6 below re litter picking and 122 below re Planning matters.*

**119.10 Working Groups reports.** *Members include volunteer parishioners as well as parish councillors. Offers to join or start new groups welcomed. See also The Springs 121.3, New Pavilion 119.1.*

**119.10.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group** (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy) Cllr Graham Lee reported that following changes, the consultant had communicated with the relevant NHDC officer and additional consultation would be required. It was hoped that this could be actioned in the new few weeks.

**119.10.2 Yearbook Group** (leader Cllr Norton Mahy) Cllr Norton Mahy reported that the 2020 edition was scheduled for delivery to all households and businesses this coming weekend. Volunteers were scheduled to insert various leaflets and undertake delivery rounds.

**119.10.3 Local business support** (leader Cllr Graham Lee) *See 120.1 below.*

**119.10.4 Tree Group** (leader Cllr David Sims) *See also 119.6.1 above and 122.6 below.*

**119.10.5 Village Sports Day** It was reported that this was scheduled for Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May.

**119.10.6 Litter Picking** Cllr Norton Mahy reported that this was scheduled for Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April, meeting up at 2pm at the Pavilion. As previously NHDC were to provide litter pickers, bags etc.

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*Standing orders reinstated from here.*

## **120. Matters of report from previous meetings.**

**120.1** New village map. Cllr Graham Lee reported that an initial draft had been received. More design work was needed but good progress was being made.

## **121. PREMISES MANAGEMENT REPORTS**

*(individual parish councillor's responsibilities shown in brackets)*

**121.1 Cemetery.** Nothing to report.

**121.2 Recreation Ground including the pavilion, public toilets and the playground.**

(Responsible: Cllrs Mark White and Gemma Allan) *See also item 119.1 above.*

Cllr Gemma Allan reported on progress for additional equipment to address the paucity of opportunities for 8-18 year olds. It was agreed that the proposed bid to the Henry Colbron Trust for a MUGA to replace the skateboard area be progressed. Further discussion re other additional equipment was on going.

**121.3 The Springs.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman)

Cllr Martin Hoffman reported: (i) A successful volunteer working party had taken place last weekend. (ii) The scheduled tree survey had been delayed because of recent bad weather. (iii) He had noted recent communications that had referred to future planting and wished to re-emphasize that any actions at the Springs must be consistent with the Management Plan and, because of the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status, must be approved by the relevant authorities.

**121.4 Small Gains.** Allotments, Accies sports field and shared car parking area.

(Responsible: Cllr David Sims)

Cllr David Sims reported that the repairs to the track were pending dry weather.

**121.5 The Lock Up.** (Responsible: Cllr Norton Mahy)

Cllr Norton Mahy reported that installation of the new plaque was pending.

**121.6 Merchant Taylors' Green.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**121.7 Carters' Pond.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that repairs to the seat were pending action by the supplier.

**121.8 Street furniture.** The Chairman reported that two replacement bins had been installed.

**121.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that grass cutting would commence here, and in other areas around the village, next week.

**121.10 Parish Clock.** (Responsible: Cllr Mark White) Nothing to report.

**121.11 War Memorial.** Nothing to report.

## **122. PLANNING MATTERS**

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

**122.1** New applications received from NHDC for consultation.

Bluegates Farm, Loves Lane. NHDC Case Ref. 20/00332/FP.

Full planning permission: Agricultural covered yard building.

A proposal was made that a recommendation be made to the Planning Officer that permission be granted.

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

**Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

**122.2 Land at the junction of Ashwell Street and Station Road.** NHDC Case Ref.19/02691/S73.

Section 73 application, variation of condition 8 - footway.

It was noted that District Councillor Tom Tyson had communicated with the Planning Officer re the Parish Council’s alternative proposals for the new section of footway.

**122.3 Land rear of 4-14 Claybush Road.** NHDC Case Ref. 16/01797/1.

(i) Discharge of Condition 24 (Pedestrian access from Ashwell Street). The email exchanges with the NHDC Planning Officer were noted. Concerns had been raised that the developer was progressing activity on site in contravention of the condition that required approval and completion of the agreed pedestrian access prior to the commencement of development. District Cllr Tom Tyson reported that he had taken this up with the Planning Officer. Cllr Graham Lee reported that, following complaints from local residents, he had spoken to the Planning Officer. It was apparent that there was a mismatch as to what various parties considered to be progressing with the development and what was clearance of the site. The Chairman reported that the Planning Officer had been requested to supply contact details for Building Control as this might well be needed during the build process. They had responded, ‘As far as I know this is not information in the public domain. You could try contacting Croudace directly and asking the who they normally appoint or they may even have their own in house team.’ Parish councillors expressed great concern at this and it was agreed that the matter be taken further. **Action: MNW/Clerk**

(ii) It was noted that the proposed application for a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) to cover all trees on the site was pending input from various expert parties.

(iii) The further correspondence between local residents and the NHDC Planning Officer was noted.

**122.4 Former Cooke Engineering site/Parish Council’s proposal for planting and remedial works on the Highways verge adjacent to the site damaged during the build process.**

The volunteer input by the ‘Greening Ashwell’ group was noted.

*See also 119.5 above.*

**122.5 Land between Lucas Lane and Ashwell Street known as Hunts Close. Case Ref. 20/00126/FP.**

The consultation response sent to the NHDC Planning Officer was noted.

**122.6 Chestnut tree/development in front of Townsend House opposite the Recreation Ground.**

Cllr David Sims reported the information from the NHDC Planning Officer that the tree was to be felled. Regret was expressed.

**122.7 District Local Plan Examination.**

The statement sent to the Inspector for the forthcoming hearing was noted.

**123. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

**123.1** Monthly summary of accounts. Proposal for approval.

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

**123.2** Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit. Proposal to approve.

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

**123.3** Review of the Headline Risk Assessment Policy. Proposal to approve.

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

**Meeting closed at 9.25pm**

**Forthcoming meeting dates:**

March Council - Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, 8pm in the Parish Room.

Annual Parish Meeting -Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 8pm at the school.

Chairman’s Signature.....Date.....
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**Appendix: Summary of recent planning consultations as of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

*Details of applications are sent from North Herts District Council (NHDC) to the Parish Council as a consultee. These are available on [www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk).*

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
Bluegates Farm, Loves Lane	20/00332/FP	Agricultural covered yard building	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Pending
Land between Hunsridge and East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane	20/00126/FP	24 new dwellings	Planning Committee 16 Feb PC to NHDC: request for further information	Pending
51/53 Back Street	19/03066/FP	Detached double garage, inseretion of sliding boundary gate and ancillary works following demolition of garage	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Pending
1 Fordham Close	19/02840/FPH	Single side side/rear extension linking main dwelling to existing garage	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Permission Granted
The Old Rectory, Hodwell	19/02675/LBC & 19/02674/FPH	1st Floor & single storey extensions, conversion of garage to playroom/store & erection of detached opne bay garage & storage	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Pending

**Appendix: Monthly accounts summary**

<b>ACCOUNTS - Summary for 01/02/2020 - 29/02/2020</b>			
<b>RECEIPTS</b>			<b>£</b>
72	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (November)	68.75
73	Jeremy Rule Funenal Director	Payment for CW 20.01	135.00
74	Resident	Part payment for repairs to small gains lane	180.00
75	Accies FC	Part payment for repairs to small gains lane	180.00
76	Resident	Part payment for repairs to small gains lane	180.00
77	Rhubarb & Mustard	Sales of yearbook 2019	40.00
78	Local Landowner	Part payment for repairs to small gains lane	180.00
79	Groundwork Herts	P3 Grant for footpath leaflet	395.79
80	Santander Reserve account	Interest 01/01/2020	6.13
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,365.67</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
207	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Public Toilet Cleaning	353.00
208	Duo Design	Website Hosting 01/02/2020	30.00
209	Arena Stationers	Noticeboard for office	66.00
210	NHDC	Springs trade waste bin	110.50
211	Parkes Display & Expo	Ashwell Footpath Leaflet printing	395.79
212	EON	Electricity for Pavilion (10/12/19)	35.02
213	Sarah Wroot	Copy of text from Ashwell footpath leaflet	25.00
214	BT	Phone and broadband (inc line and a/c changes)	197.29
215	EON	Electricity for Toilets (05/02/2020)	9.07
216	Clerk	Clerk's salary	1,301.02
217	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	149.20
218	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	421.93
219	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	723.78
220	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk's Salary	793.73
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>4,611.33</b>
<b>MONEY AT BANK</b>			
			Current Account 29/02/2020
			<b>£24,814.85</b>
			Reserve Account 29/02/2020
			<b>£20,669.73</b>