

Dr Martin Hoffman`s Jottings.
From the Ashwell Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday June 3rd 2020
(full minutes on www.ashwell.gov.uk)

Following the **rejection of the Jottings in the Ashwell Village News** (which was subsequently published on the website) an “interesting” discussion took place. It was accepted that the Parish Council (PC) being a statutory body was responsible for reporting actions and decisions to the village. The content should not be selected and/or altered by the editor. There had been much unsolicited support of this view from Villagers.

The Chairman reported that he had spoken to the new editor and it was agreed to submit a Jottings report and see what happens. It was pointed out that the length the Jottings depends upon what is going on in the village. Not everything by a long chalk is published. A glance at what is “acceptable” makes interesting reading, e.g. mentioning the marvellous efforts made by Parishioners to help people not able to leave their house. Mentioning the Coronavirus is “hardly uplifting”.

The **water supply issues** in parts of the village has caused great hardship to many. Some did not receive bottled water for an unacceptable delay. This was not a one-off episode, and only after contacting the CEO of Affinity Water was the issue (a persistent leak along the Ashwell/Bygrave Road) dealt with. Responsible use of water and respect for it as a valuable, and not limitless, resource has always been emphasised in Ashwell. Incidentally the flow rate at the Springs is still excellent, but it would take three months to have an effect which is why we are fortunate in having an SSSI status we negotiated some years ago to protect the flows!

More **children have now started to return to school**, in addition to those of key workers.

Whilst the PC remain very supportive in the principle of “**Greening Ashwell**” it was noted in their recent newsletter there were errors in the Ashwell Parish Land section, where two of the three sites are not owned by the PC and a proposal for a new section of hedge around the Recreation Ground is already on the PC list. Similarly, the hedge planting at Small Gains was a PC initiative.

I reported last time that some landowners were approached, unbeknown to the PC, about planting. Any improvement to beautify the environment is to be totally supported, but there must be co-operation/communication and it would be beneficial to all to see communications before publication. It is not a competition!

The concept of **dial-a-ride** has been discussed before and Councillor Tom Tyson will support the PC who will advise NHDC to pursue the pros and cons of such a service which, for example, could run between Ashwell and say Baldock when the service was available. This is at an early stage and it mustn't allow the existing bus service to be stopped and coordination would be essential and although reassurance “has been given” I hope this will happen. Please don't think I am wary, I have been around for a long time!

Councillor Steve Jarvis reported the position of some 20 mph signs were being “looked at”, and this could enable the 20 mph to include Station Road. The limited time restriction signs outside retailers are being installed.

The **West End chicane proposal** is being progressed by Highways engineers which will slow the traffic approaching the end of Back Street and the high wall which is a threat to mothers with toddlers or prams as well as large lorries and coaches coming together. The path is very narrow for both children and adults. Parishioners concerns about **traffic speeding** and the enforcement of the 20 mph were raised. **Speedwatch groups** operate in slightly different way than the one we had some years ago.

Members of the public raised a number of issues including **the scruffy, persisting and clearly abandoned vegetation** in Alms House Lane. The wall does not belong to the PC and thus if the PC arranged for it to be cleared it will be down to the PC if the wall is broken.

It is “said” that a volunteer group are going to move it. That's all I can say because if I said how the situation has arisen and why, lack of response despite PC pressure and a number of other irritating issues

it would probably be the last Jottings I would write! In days gone past it would have been dealt with on one dark night.

The issue of very noisy **cars performing very noisy manoeuvres** in the evenings in Northfield's Road and Kingsland Way have caused disruption to families frequently. The police have been informed and are carrying out extra patrols.

Sadly, there is antisocial behaviour and littering **in Small Gains** and extra patrols are being carried out by the police. It's so sad that this behaviour is upsetting so many people.

The weather naturally caused a lot more people to go to **the Springs** and the amount of extra rubbish had to be taken away was amazing. The PC should say "why don't you take your rubbish home with you" but from the reports we have had from a number of local people on the day when children were only inches away from each other, most came from outside the Village! It got to such an overcrowding situation with the associated problems of social distancing that the police were called more than once.

Why doesn't the PC close the Springs in such a situation? It's because we cannot close the site containing a right-of-way!

The **Neighbourhood Plan Group** continue their essential compulsory work and each house will be receiving a leaflet asking some pertinent questions about Ashwell.

With best wishes and hope you are safe and well.

Dr Martin G Hoffman

Vice-chairman