



ASHWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Office at Bear Farm, 6A Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts, SG7 5PE
Mon-Thurs 08.30 -13.00 ☎ 01462 743706
Clerk: Jane Porter ✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk
Deputy Clerk: Laura Brooks-Payne ✉ deputyclerk@ashwell.gov.uk
Chairman: Mark White ☎ 07977 099951

The Parish Council meets every month on the first Wednesday at 8pm. From May until further notice this is via Zoom. All are welcome to join and will have the opportunity to speak in the 'Open Forum' session at the beginning of the meeting. Sign-up to the website for updates and to join meetings.

www.ashwell.gov.uk

Dr Martin Hoffman's Jottings **from the Ashwell Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6th May** (full minutes on www.ashwell.gov.uk)

During the many years I was at Ashwell Surgery I saw many instances of kindness by individuals or families to help one another in times of illness and trouble, but nothing as widespread and sustained as that which has occurred during the last few months. The tremendous support of the shops and organisations in and neighbouring to Ashwell and, along with volunteers, providing free delivery, has been fantastic and a lifesaver for many people compelled to stay in their homes as a result of this terrible coronavirus.

We have a long way to go yet, but Ashwell and its surrounds should be immensely proud of their commitment and kindness. The Parish Council (PC) would like to see **greater support for local businesses**, in the future.

The PC had its first meeting via Zoom which worked extremely well having ironed out a few "difficulties" a few days before the actual meeting. With the cancellation of the Parish Council AGM and others usually held around this time it was agreed to postpone elections until 2021 or sooner if circumstances change and it is agreed necessary.

Progress on such issues as the New Pavilion Project, the Ashwell and Morden Station pathway, the Village Hall Trusteeship etc etc are all on hold or progressing more slowly at the moment because many involve the need for legal input which is difficult.

A bid for funding to **improve the play facilities at the Recreation Ground** is to be submitted to the trustees of the Henry Colbron Trust. A bid has been made by an independent group of parishioners to turn the redundant school netball courts off Gardiners Lane into a children's allotment and nature area. This has been fully supported by the PC.

Our **North Herts District Councillor** (Tom Tyson) reported on the distribution of food packages from the Team based in Welwyn. The food waste and garden waste collection service would be recommenced on Monday, May 11, but by the time you read this it will have started!

Local councillors' surgeries shared between him and County Councillor Steve Jarvis are to take place on a regular basis using Zoom, the times to be publicised.

Our **County Councillor Steve Jarvis** answered issues relating to the 20-mph speed limit, and places where a new 40 mph limit applies. Some areas on the edge of the village now have a limit of 40 mph which had previously been a 60 mph. Yes, it sounds incredibly complicated, but regulations insist we have to have these signs to satisfy regulations (or do I mean bureaucracy!). Timed parking spaces outside retail outlets also should have started by May 11th.

The **Neighbourhood Plan Group** gave a report stating they were awaiting a response from Historic England. The designation of Local Green Spaces was being pursued. The group had written to some

local landowners which caused “some unrest” and the proposals were to be revised. The author of this report suggested the group publish what is going on in an easier digestible and understandable way in the future!

The **Tree Group lead** had spoken to the leader of the “Greening Ashwell” group and stressed the importance of his group working together with the PC so that there is no conflict in the future. The Woodland Trust had been asked for clarifications regarding **Tree Preservation Orders** (TPO’s). It confirmed that TPO’s were of course under the control of district and not parish councils and second opinions were only taken into consideration for public land.

It was reported that although the **Museum** was closed to the public, items that had been in storage elsewhere were slowly being moved back. The fallen vegetation in Alms Lane was awaiting action from Hertfordshire Highways.

About a dozen complaints had been received about the **ornamental planting on village verges**. Complainants had felt that hyacinths and tulips were inappropriate on rural verges where native flora should be encouraged to grow. It was agreed to request that those responsible make contact so that the preference expressed for native planting could be discussed with them.

Selection from Premises Management Reports

The **playground** remains closed, but the grass area is open for family play. **Badger activity** has been noted on the Recreation Ground. This needs to be watched/controlled because considerable damage can be caused even though cricket is not being played now. The flow rates at **the Springs** are the highest for many years which will not surprise many people, and it is hoped that this rate will erode the silt that has accumulated in the basin of the river. The **tree survey** showed nothing significant. (You may be interested to know that we pay £1242 for regular surveys on the trees, not just the Springs, but other areas for which the PC are responsible). Following concerns raised by the removal of vegetation leading down to the river on the west side a new fence will be erected both aimed for safety and ownership of where the PC land extends.

Sadly, I cannot end without mentioning the coronavirus again.

Discussions had taken place with the sports clubs who use PC facilities. It has been agreed that the Football Club and the Accies be granted a 25% reduction in the rent charged for the use of the facilities to reflect the impact on curtailment of their playing season and income loss. The Cricket Club will be granted a one-year holiday in their repayment for the roller and mower (which were initially financed by the PC) and be charged nil rent for the coming season as any play seems very unlikely at this stage. There will be no income from the funfair this year. The total financial loss to the PC will be in the order of £1540 covered by reserves.

I hope you don’t think these jottings were too brief, but you can see the large amount of activities that will not take place and further comment from me would be superfluous. It would have been possible to write huge amounts relating to the effects of the Covid-19 on all our lives and the fantastic response from the people of Ashwell, both young and old. Please remember those who have paid the ultimate price and their relations and friends.

With best wishes
Dr Martin G Hoffman
(Vice-chairman)