

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting held on
Wednesday 01 June 2016 in the Parish Room**

Present: Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman), Madeleine Legg, David Short, David Sims.

The Clerk was also in attendance. Members of the public: Five parishioners.

It was noted that the AGM's of the charities the Ashwell Village Trust and the Allotment for Exercise and Recreation had been held immediately prior to the Parish Council meeting.

17. Apologies Cllr Graham Lee (away on business), Cllr Bridget Macey (unwell).

18. Minutes of the meeting 4th May 2016

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

19. Matters of general report from previous meetings

19.1 (May Council, 9.1) Cricket Club correspondence. The Chairman reported on the matters previously discussed, (i) new specialist mower: the club had informed that the purchase was being progressed and an invoice was awaited; it was agreed that the funds allocated be released once the paperwork was in hand, (ii) licensed bar at the pavilion; confirmation re liability was awaited from the club.

The Chairman reported that the club had requested that the recently purchased covers for the square be included in the Parish Council's insurance. It was noted that other club equipment such as the sight screens were not covered by the Parish Council's policy, nor was there precedence for other club's equipment being included. It was agreed that the club should make its own insurance arrangements. It was also agreed to request where the club intended to store the covers when not in use. Concerns were raised that the covers were vulnerable to misuse by children playing on the Recreation Ground and it was agreed to ask whether the club had carried out an appropriate risk assessment. **Clerk**

19.2 (May Council, 9.2) Post office services in the Parish Room. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the new windows were to be installed in the week commencing Monday 6th June. Post office services would continue as usual using the kitchen area; this would be accessed from the hallway. The public waiting area would be closed off to keep the building works separate. Post Office Ltd and the local operator were satisfied with these arrangements. The Churchwarden had carried out a risk assessment on behalf of the PCC as manager of the building.

19.3 (May Council, 9.3) 1st Ashwell Scout Group fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD). The Chairman reported that the documents had been received from BT for the Parish Council to adopt the old red telephone box in the High Street to house the unit. It was proposed that, (i) the documents be signed, (ii) the unit be added to the insurance policy, (iii) the Scouts be asked if they would like to suggest the wording and format for the notice that was required to be displayed.

It was *resolved* that the proposals be accepted. **Clerk**

19.4 (April Council, 111.3) Superfast broadband. It was noted that, following national publicity of the unsatisfactory service in rural areas, further communications had been received from Sir Oliver Heald, MP, on the Government's commitment to giving all households in the UK access to fast broadband. It was agreed that the Parish Council would continue to lobby for a high standard of service for all Ashwell residents and businesses; individuals were encouraged to do the same.

19.5 (April Council, 113.1.4) Parishioner's request to consider a layby at the rear of the school. Cllr David Short reported that he had discussed the proposal with the Head and the Business Manager. They had been supportive in principle but only if it could be sited away from the vehicle and pedestrian gates, ie further to the west towards Bear Lane. It was noted that the matter was a Herts Highways responsibility. The Parish Council had discussed with them similar proposals, to enhance the area and to increase safety, several times over the years. The main constraints to any action had been the complexity of the junction and, even if a workable design could be agreed, the significant costs of works. Concern was expressed that a layby to the west of the entrances would further complicate an already difficult junction. Regulations existed that required the school mini-buses to enter and exit the site in forward gear (it was alleged during the open forum session that the buses parked on the verge area and did not enter the site). Cllr David Short (school representative) agreed to investigate the matter further. **CDS**

20. Parish management reports (current responsibilities shown in brackets)

(Routine matters concerning the management of parish assets and amenities are usually not discussed or reported to full council meetings; some are dealt with by the Management Committee, others directly by parish councillors and/or the Clerk)

(Draft minutes of last Management/Finance Committee Tuesday 16th February 2016 available)

20.1 Cemetery (Cllr Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that proposals for the Chapel of Rest lease were being progressed. A contact at Curwens Solicitor had been briefed and a response was awaited.

20.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg). Nothing to report but see 19.1 above.

20.3 Playground (Cllr Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the graffiti had been painted over. It was noted that the new wet-pour surfacing was due to be installed in the week commencing Monday 6th June.

20.4 Public toilets at the pavilion (Cllr Madeleine Legg). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had discussed the objectives, and constraints, for the provision of upgraded facilities with local building surveyor/architect Bob Swain; his advice had been very helpful. Compliance with current standards, particularly re disability, would require significant changes. She had summarised the objectives in an email to NHDC Community Development Manager, Stuart Izzard, to keep him informed and to seek his guidance on accessing section 106 funds for the project. The next stage was to seek formal quotes from appropriate suppliers for drawing up plans and providing build costs.

20.5 The Springs (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported, (i) there had been an incident of fly-tipping; this had been cleared by the NHDC contractor, (ii) the go-ahead for the re-painting of the green railings was pending input from County Councillor Tony Hunter (funding to come from his budget).

20.6 Small Gains (Allotments, Accies sports field and shared car parking area) (Cllr David Sims).

Cllr David Sims reported on the recent meeting of the allotment tenants; this had been very positive (notes available). All plots were currently let. Following concerns that the netting protecting the allotments from the football field was in need of replacement, he had contacted several suppliers for quotes.

It was **resolved** that the quote from Balaam Brothers of Potton be accepted and the works progressed.

DRS/Clerk

Cllr David Sims reported that he had also contacted suppliers re surfacing to the shared car parking area. Development of the Small Gains site for sports use had made enhancement of the car park a necessity on safety grounds.

It was agreed that a section 106 claim be drafted to fund this.

DRS/Clerk

20.7 Miscellaneous amenities

(The Lock Up - Cllr David Short. Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond - Cllr Martin Hoffman)

It was noted that the refurbishment of the signage outside the Lock Up and on the seat on Merchant Taylors Green was to be progressed.

Clerk

20.8 Street furniture (Cllr Bridget Macey) It was noted that refurbishment of the seats around the village had been completed by the handyman; he would now be requested to attend to the litter bins as needed.

Clerk

20.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that routine grounds maintenance was ongoing. In addition, two items had been identified by St Mary's PCC to be funded by the Parish Council. Cllr Hoffman proposed that the works and quotation re the trees along the Mill Street boundary be agreed and these be progressed subject to the PCC obtaining the necessary permissions.

The second item involved the Holm Oak adjacent to the Swan Street boundary that the Parish Council had paid to have cut back only last year at a cost of £1,600. His intention was to question this before making any proposals; a meeting with PCC representatives was to be scheduled.

It was **resolved** that the proposal for works to the trees on the Mill Street boundary be accepted.

Clerk

20.10 Parish Clock (Cllr Mark White) Nothing to report.

20.11 War Memorial (currently no named parish councillor as representative)

It was noted that proposals for works to the boundary hedge were pending further quotations.

Clerk

21. Items re other authorities/organisations

21.1 Hertfordshire Highways

21.1.1 (May Council, 11.1.1) Update on the proposals for Station Road safety improvements. Cllr David Sims reported that since various items had been agreed at a site meeting, he had received no further information despite several emails to the relevant officer. Cllr Martin Hoffman again emphasized the need for a flashing speed sign at the Newnham Way entrance to the village as well as in Station Road; there was clear evidence of excessive speeds at this location. It was understood that funding from a safety budget might be available to fund one mobile unit with a base at both locations.

21.1.2 (May Council, 11.1.2) Northfields Road/agreed drainage maintenance works to address the severe flooding issues (funded from County Councillor Tony Hunter's Highways Locality Budget).

A further exchange of emails between resident Nicki Holmes and Rob Smith, Deputy Director Environment (Highways) Herts County Council was noted.

21.1.3 Items allocated for expenditure in 2016-17 from County Councillor Tony Hunter's Highways Locality Budget (HLB) (www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets) and his Locality Budget (LB) (www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets) were noted. The HLB included re-surfacing of Fordham Close (£7,755) and Station Road (£11,530), both detailed as 'Reason: Priority scheme selected by highway condition assessment.' The LB included 'One-off enhanced routine highways maintenance programme' (£5,000).

21.1.4 (March Council, 103.1.4) It was noted that information for any potential bids to the Police Road Safety Fund was pending further input from County Councillor Tony Hunter.

21.1.5 A proposal was made to invite County Councillor Tony Hunter and any relevant highways officers to a Parish Council meeting to answer questions pending from both parish councillors and his constituents (see items re Herts Highways above).

It was **resolved** that an invitation be extended.

Clerk

21.1.6 LED Street-lighting. The Chairman reported that an email had been sent to all parish councils from the Senior Asset Manager giving details, including the timetable, for the programme to convert all units to LED lighting; 'North Herts -February 2017'. It was agreed that communications be established with relevant personnel to, (i) determine the details of the proposed works and, (ii) to ensure that the design standards for the parish's lighting remained, ie swan neck, heritage-style columns in the correct green colour and lighting of an intensity suitable for a rural area.

Clerk

21.2 Hertfordshire Highways/Rights of Way It was noted that the HCC officer had sent information on works to be progressed at either end of Ashwell Street to address the poor state of the surface; this was welcomed.

21.3 North Herts District Council

21.3.1 (May Council, 11.2.1) Street naming consultation/new development at Sunnymead Farm. Further correspondence with the NHDC officer was noted; the current proposal was for 'Shire End Close, Ashwell'.

21.3.2 (NHDC Members Information, 27th May 2016) Waste Management and Street Cleansing Contract. It was noted that this was to go out to tender for a new contract from Spring 2018. It was understood that 'new zones and adoption of intelligent cleansing' were to be progressed. It was agreed to make contact with relevant NHDC personnel to, (i) determine the proposed details, (ii) request changes to the previous schedule to include works by hand operatives to achieve cleansing of areas that could not effectively be reached by a mechanical sweeping lorry.

Clerk

22. Reports re planning matters

(draft minutes of meetings of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 11th May and Sunday 15th May now available)

22.1 Consultations received (from NHDC as Planning Authority to Parish Council as consultee)

(If any objections are raised either by a parishioner or a parish councillor an on-site meeting of the Planning Committee is convened to consider those items; see notice board or contact Clerk for agenda)

No new applications received.

22.1.1 Case Ref No: 16/01034/1HH, 55 Back Street.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension.

It was noted that concerns had been conveyed to the Planning Officer (see minutes Planning Committee, 11th May 2016) and further information subsequently received, (i) updated plans showing the location of a

bathroom, (ii) confirmation that concerns re the existing outside wall, 'any issues of land ownership here are of a civil nature beyond the remit or control of the Local Planning Authority'.

22.2 To note any decisions on planning applications made by NHDC as Planning Authority.

22.2.1 (April Council, 114.1.3) Case Ref No: 16/00573/1. Barn A, Dixies Barns, High Street.

Full Planning Permission: Installation of three velux conservation windows in west elevation roof-slope.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

22.2.2 (Planning Committee 11th May 2016) Case Ref No: 16/00681/1HH, 21 Dixies Close.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Two storey side extension, single storey front & rear extensions.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

22.2.3 (Planning Committee 11th May 2016) Case Ref No: 15/03014/1, 22 and 24 Hodwell.

Full Planning Permission: Two replacement 2 bedroom dwellings following demolition of existing dwellings and ancillary works (as amended by plans received 5.4.16).

NHDC decision: Conditional Permission.

22.2.4 (Planning Committee 11th May 2016) Case Ref No: 16/00783/1HH, East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane.

Full Planning Permission Householder: Conversion of garden store to two-bedroom annexe. New garden store.

NHDC decision: Conditional Permission.

22.3 District Local Plan 2011-2031. It was noted that there had been no further communications from NHDC. Cllr David Short reported that the draft Neighbourhood Plan had been submitted.

23. Reports re Finance matters

23.1 (May Council, 13.1) Section 106 claims to NHDC. It was noted that project proposals were to be drafted; these would then be discussed with NHDC Community Development Manager, Stuart Izzard, before formal submission. (see 20.4 above)

23.2 Local Government Pension Scheme. It was noted that the 2015-16 year-end submission had been completed.

23.3 HMRC. It was noted that the 2015-16 year-end submission had been completed and P60's issued to employees.

23.4 Audit 2015-16.

23.4.1 The timetable was noted, (i) public 'available for inspection' period from 1st July to 11th August, (ii) publication of unaudited accounts by 30th June and audited accounts by 30th September, (iii) submission to the External Auditor by the audit date of 25th July.

23.4.2 Submission to the Internal Auditor/Annual Return Section 4. It was noted that all documents had been prepared for the Internal Audit.

23.4.3 Annual Return Sections 1 (Governance Statement) and 2 (Statement of Accounts) with appendices.

A proposal was made for the approval and signature of both sections.

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

Clerk

23.5 Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

Cllr David Short declared an interest, item 56.

It was **resolved** that these be approved and paid (see appendix).

Clerk

24. To receive any reports from working groups

24.1 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) see 22.3 above.

24.2 Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Nothing further to report.

24.3 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Nothing further to report.

24.4 Speeding Watch Group (leader Cllr Martin Hoffman) see 21.1.1 above and 26.2.4 below.

24.5 Ashwell Village Sports (leader Parishioner Martin Talks) It was noted that the event had been successful and well-attended.

25. Personnel matters

25.1 The proposal for the recruitment of an additional employee to assist the Clerk was further discussed. It was agreed that fuller details and requirements/procedures to be followed needed to be determined. It was agreed that, (i) a local volunteer with relevant HR expertise be sought to give guidance, (ii) a meeting of interested parish councillors be convened to progress the matter, (iii) the Clerk be requested to draw up a list of matters to be addressed to inform further discussion, eg job description, person profile, employers' responsibilities, hours to be worked, office location etc.

MFL/MNW/Clerk

26. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM

Item taken at 8.30pm

26.1.1 The Village Hall (Cllr Mark White representative). Cllr Mark White reported that he had attended the AGM of the trustees. The proposal had again been discussed that the trusteeship, currently independent, be taken on by the Parish Council. He had been asked to raise the matter with parish councillors to determine their views. It was agreed that parish councillors would consider the proposal and it be discussed at a future meeting. **All**

26.1.2 Ashwell School Governing Body (Cllr David Short representative; a school governor in his own right). Cllr David Short reported that the process to find a replacement head was ongoing; it was likely that an interim appointment would have to be made.

26.1.3 Moss Cottage Homes (Cllr Madeleine Legg a Parish Council nominated trustee). Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that a recent meeting had discussed routine matters.

26.1.4 Cllr David Short reported further discussions with the parishioner who had made proposals at the Annual Parish Meeting for the support of village shops and services; a leaflet was being planned. Parish councillors were supportive of such initiatives and the question was raised as to what the Parish Council could, or should, do given the resources available to support local businesses. It was agreed that the local business group be approached for their input as to how the Parish Council might assist them. **Clerk**

26.1.5 Cllr Madeleine Legg reported on suggestions for an outdoor gym at the Recreation Ground. The view was expressed that this was worth investigating and she agreed to come back with more detailed proposals. **MFL**

26.2 Items raised by parishioners.

26.2.1 Concern re the badger digging in Kingsland Way. It was noted that this had been brought to the attention of Herts Highways some time ago; the matter would be reported again.

26.2.2 Parking problems outside the school -see 19.5 above.

26.2.3 Concerns re Giant Hogweed on the verge of Ashwell Street. It was agreed to ensure that the HCC Rights of Way officer was informed as soon as possible so that appropriate action could be taken. **Clerk**
(It was subsequently determined that the plants were large examples of ordinary, not giant, hogweed so the HCC officer was not asked for input)

26.2.4 Road safety concerns at West End and elsewhere. It was noted that correspondence had been received from a parishioner and from a representative of the John Sale Close Residents Association. The latter had included various proposals to address their concerns. It was noted that the Parish Council had for many years lobbied the responsible authority, Herts Highways, for works to improve the safety of all road users throughout the village. Options discussed had included 20mph speed limits, roundabouts, various traffic calming measures and parking restrictions such as yellow lines. Cllr Martin Hoffman wished to counter the allegation that the Parish Council was against measures such as yellow lines; this was not true. He wished to emphasize the difficulty of finding solutions that were both achievable and enforceable. He cited as examples the rejection by highways engineers of the Parish Council's proposals for mini-roundabouts at the junctions by the War Memorial and at West End. Also the request earlier this year for extension of the existing yellow lines outside the school; this had been rejected on the grounds that the maximum permissible length was already in place. Enforcement of parking restrictions was no longer undertaken by the police. The responsible authority was NHDC but they lacked sufficient resources to cover rural areas such as Ashwell. Installation of white lines, known as H-bars, had been requested at West End, Church Lane and some other locations but rejected as 'no longer supported'. The Parish Council was currently awaiting a response from County Councillor Tony Hunter following promises that funds could be found to install flashing speed devices in Station Road and possibly also Newnham Way.

It was noted that reports had been received that parked cars had prevented access of the waste lorry from Kingsland Way into Silver Street and bins had consequently not been emptied. The Parish Council had requested parking restrictions at this location for many years.

It was noted that the Parish Council had a 'yellow card' scheme, endorsed by the police, aimed at countering obstructive and dangerous parking; these cards were available for distribution by parishioners.

It was noted that the Parish Council also encouraged parishioners to report their concerns direct to the appropriate authorities and to lobby elected members for action.

Meeting closed to the public at 10.00pm for an *in camera* item

Standing Order item 62.

That in view of the special nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

Item 27. To be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that it included personnel matters.

Forthcoming meetings

Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 6th July 2016, 8pm in the Parish Room.

Appendix 1 – General material received

Items routinely forwarded to parish councillors by email

- North Herts District Council -weekly 'Members Information'
- HAPTC -Briefings and Bulletins.
- SLCC -updates and newsletters.
- Police OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins.
- Sunnymead Park Homes newsletter

Appendix 2

| ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -June 2016 | | | 01 June 2016 | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Proposed (i) Cllr Sims (ii) Cllr Hoffman | | | Declarations: | | |
| | | | Cllr Short item 56 | | |
| | | | £ | £ | £ |
| Receipts | | | Precept | Grants | Other Total |
| 17 | Dignity Funerals Ltd | burial (cemetery works 16.15) | | | 120.00 120.00 |
| 18 | Peasgood & Skeates | burial (cemetery works 16.14) | | | 500.00 500.00 |
| 19 | Ms Julie Shaw | allotment rent plot 4a | | | 7.50 7.50 |
| 20 | Henry Harris Funfair | rec rent | | | 400.00 400.00 |
| 21 | David Short | yearbook sales x2 | | | 5.00 5.00 |
| 22 | Santander | bank interest | | | 11.21 11.21 |
| 23 | Neville Funeral Service | chapel rent | | | 68.75 68.75 |
| 24 | HMRC | vat reclaim 2015-16 | | | 3596.21 3596.21 |
| Total | | | | 0.00 | 4,708.67 4,708.67 |
| Payments | | | Admin, office costs & Other Misc | Management of Parish Assets & Amenities | VAT Total |
| By Direct Debit | | | | | |
| 42 | NHDC (01/05/2016) | trade refuse bin (Alms Lane) | | 97.37 | 97.37 |
| 43 | BT (18/05/2016) | office phone and broadband | 13 June 1900 | | 33.04 198.27 |
| 44 | E.ON (24/05/16) | pavilion electricity | | 11.57 | 0.58 12.15 |
| 45 | E.ON (03/05/16) | chapel electricity | | 11.00 | 11.00 |
| 46 | E.ON (23/05/16) | toilets electricity | | 11.23 | 0.56 11.79 |
| By Cheque | | | | | |
| 47 | J C M Porter | Clerk's salary | 1097.99 | | 1,097.99 |
| 48 | HCC Pensions -LGPS Account | clerk's pension | 402.70 | | 402.70 |
| 49 | J C M Porter | reimbursement office expenses | 48.84 | | 7.55 56.39 |
| 50 | M Barden | Environmental Cleansing | | 252.83 | 252.83 |
| 51 | M Chandler | Duties at Pavilion and Rec | | 73.20 | 73.20 |
| 52 | Post Office | tax&NI to Inland Revenue | 230.00 | 65.20 | 295.20 |
| 53 | K Clifford | Premises duties | | 30.00 | 30.00 |
| 54 | Ashwell Village Museum | annual grant re At Home | 100.00 | | 100.00 |
| 55 | Clockwise Restorations | parish clock annual service and minor works | | 168.00 | 168.00 |
| 56 | C D Short | reimbursement labels/notebook for Book Swap | | 20.40 | 4.08 24.48 |
| 57 | MCL Communications Ltd | webhosting services | 115.00 | | 23.00 138.00 |
| 58 | D J Granger | grounds maintenance worksheet 5 | | 333.00 | 66.60 399.60 |
| 59 | D J Granger | grounds maintenance worksheet 6 | | 594.00 | 118.80 712.80 |
| 60 | M Barden | reimbursement expenses | | 1.25 | 1.25 |
| 61 | CDAHerts | annual subscription | 30.00 | | 30.00 |
| 62 | Liberty Co Ltd | toilets cleaning (02/05-29/05) | | 128.00 | 25.60 153.60 |
| 63 | St Mary's Ashwell PCC | parish clock/Cousins Electrical | | 172.50 | 172.50 |
| Total | | | 2,024.53 | 1,838.38 | 245.63 4,108.54 |
| Outstanding Accounts | | | | | |
| Football Club | | | | | 850.00 |
| Yearbook 2016 adverts (x5) | | | | | 865.00 |
| Total | | | | | 1,715.00 |
| Money at bank | | | | | |
| Current Account | | | 01 June 2016 | | 59,659.08 |
| Deposit Account | | | 03 May 2016 | | 30,392.22 |
| Total | | | | | 90,051.30 |
| Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after | | | | | 5.00 |
| Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding | | | | | 110.99 |
| Total | | | | | 89,945.31 |
| Total after paying this months cheques | | | | | 85,836.77 |
| Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques | | | | | 55,444.55 |