

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting held on  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 in the Parish Room**

**Present:** Councillors Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman),  
Madeleine Legg, Bridget Macey, David Sims, David Short.  
The Clerk was also in attendance.  
Members of the public: Three parishioners.

**112. Apologies for absence** None.

**113. Minutes of previous meeting 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017**

It was *resolved* that the minutes be approved and signed.

**Clerk**

**114. Matters of general report from previous meetings**

**114.1** (February Council, 103.1) 1<sup>st</sup> Ashwell Scout Group fundraising for a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD). It was noted that refurbishment, including repainting, signage and installation of the PAD was pending. The Chairman reported that he would contact the Scouts for an update.

**MNW**

**114.2** (February Council, 103.2) Superfast broadband. It was noted that no further information had been received; it was evident that BT works were still ongoing around the village.

**115. Parish management reports** (current responsibilities shown in brackets)

*(Routine matters concerning the management of parish assets and facilities 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 Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 available)*

**115.1 Cemetery** (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Chapel of Rest tenancy agreement. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had chased the Parish Council's solicitor for action and had spoken to the director of Nevilles. Both parties were somewhat frustrated with the lack of progress by their respective solicitors.

**115.2 Recreation Ground and Pavilion** (Cllrs Mark White and Madeleine Legg)

Cllr Madeleine Legg reported.

**115.2.1** New signage. Delivery was due this week.

**115.2.2** New storage containers for clubs use. Protection of the pitch surface had been considered.

It was agreed that installation of two new units be progressed.

**MNW**

See also below – 115.4 re cleaning and 119.1 re upgrade project/bid to NHDC.

**115.3 Playground** (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Nothing to report.

**115.4 Public toilets at the pavilion** (Cllr Madeleine Legg) Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that she had ordered a deep clean of the toilets. This would be scheduled between the football and cricket seasons and prior to the At Home; it would also include the pavilion showers.

See also 119.1 below re enhancement project/claim to NHDC from planning obligations.

**115.5 The Springs** (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that concerns re the River Rhee had been received. These had included the construction of a dam across the river by a local resident and, further downstream, clearance of the banks. Such matters were not the responsibility of the Parish Council so the information had been passed on to the relevant agencies, ie the Environment Agency and the HCC flood management group, with a request that they investigate. It was understood that both agencies had agreed to do this.

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

Cllr David Sims reported.

**115.6.1** Vandalism. There had been another incident where vehicles had been driven on the pitch and damaged the surface. The Accies had reported the matter to the police and had installed additional posts to prevent vehicular access. The police were continuing to monitor the site.

**115.6.2** Protective netting between the pitch and the allotments. Damage to the base of the netting was continuing to spread; the cause was still unknown. The supplier had recommended reinforcement with plastic-coated wire mesh. It was agreed that the quote be accepted and installation progressed. **DRS**

**115.7 Miscellaneous amenities**

(The Lock Up - Cllr David Short. Merchant Taylors' Green and Carters' Pond - Cllr Martin Hoffman)  
Nothing to report.

**115.8 Street furniture** (Cllr Bridget Macey) Nothing to report.

**115.9 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance** (Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**115.10 Parish Clock** (Cllr Mark White) The Chairman reported that a number of parishioners had applauded the return of the clock to working order including the chimes. A report and costings on works to repair the worn cams was pending.

**115.11 War Memorial** Nothing to report.

**116. Items re other authorities**

**116.1 Herts Highways**

See [www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets](http://www.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/CouncillorLocalityBudgets) (County Councillor Tony Hunter)

**116.1.1** Cllr David Sims reported information received at the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February with County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer,

(i) Speed Indicator Devices (SID's). HCC had now imposed new procedures that included a restriction on the number that could be installed in any one member's area. Further details were awaited.

(ii) Resurfacing works. Station Road (section adjacent to the garage) was on the list for 2017-18. The section of Mill Street adjacent to the bridge had been added to this but may have to wait until 2018-19.

(iii) Overhanging vegetation in Station Rd (section opposite the garage). There was no possibility of including

this alongside the resurfacing works. There was no funding remaining in the 'catch-up' budget.

(iv) Station Road safety requests; (a) extension of the footway on the corner of Lucas Lane by the War Memorial (objective to slow traffic/improve pedestrian safety/discourage parking). This would be further investigated but there were drainage concerns re moving the gullies. (b) new footways in both directions either side of Ashwell St to join up with the existing. Use of HCC and NHDC section 106 funds was to be investigated. (c) crossing table or similar at the junction with Ashwell Street to enhance pedestrian safety. Advice was to be taken re what options were available. As with the footway proposals, section 106 funding might be available.

(v) A505 safety improvements. New signage had now been installed. The list for action included tarmac to replace a section of grass and improved white-lining. A feasibility study was ongoing re a new roundabout at the Slip End junction. It had been pointed out that any increase in traffic on the Slip End to Ashwell road would be unacceptable as it was only single track in some parts.

(vi) Yellow lines. It had been agreed that three locations would be progressed with the design team (junction adjacent to the school, junction of Silver St and Kingsland Way, junction of Colbron Close and West End). It had been noted that a public consultation would be required on all proposals.

(vii) High Street adjacent to Dixies Barns. A proposal for 'grasscrete' to be installed where traffic was damaging the verge was to be progressed.

(viii) LED street-lighting. The project was on plan to be implemented in Ashwell this month (see also 116.1.4 below).

County Councillor Tony Hunter had also informed that his Highways Locality Budget (HLB) for 2016-17 was now closed; £16,000 of the £90,000 budget had been spent in Ashwell. The HLB for 2017-18 was now on hold until after the May elections; £20,000 of the £47,000 allocated so far was to be spent in Ashwell. Following the May elections the Boundary Commission recommendations would be implemented; this would mean that the current North Herts Rural area would change.

**116.1.2** (February Council, 105.1.4) Pedestrian safety at West End.

It was noted that, following the request by Cllr Martin Hoffman, County Councillor Tony Hunter and his Highways Officer had made a site visit. It had been agreed that investigation into possible options to reduce the danger caused by wing mirrors overhanging the narrow footway would be investigated. Cllr Martin Hoffman reiterated his request for the kerb to be highlighted by painting it white.

**116.1.3** (February Council, 105.1.3) Proposal for restricted parking spaces outside village retail outlets. It was noted that County Councillor Tony Hunter had informed that such matters were under the control of the District Council. Cllr Graham Lee reported that all relevant local businesses had been approached to determine their views and detailed proposals now drawn up. These included the number of spaces at each location and the restrictions to be imposed (a 60-minute limit with no return within one hour, Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm). The contacts at NHDC had been determined. It was agreed that Cllr Lee progress the matter.

**GEL**

**116.1.4** LED street-lighting. It was noted that a few units at various odd locations around the village had been converted. The lanterns that had hung downwards from the top of the swan-neck columns had been replaced by horizontal modern-style units in a grey colour. It was agreed that clarification be requested on what other options might be available that would be more in keeping with the swan-neck design and green colour of the columns.

**Clerk**

**116.1.5** (February Council, 105.1.5) Overgrown verges. Cllr David Short reported that one householder had responded positively to the request and the footway was now clearer.

See also item 118.1 below re Herts Highways consultation re Claybush Road.

**118. Planning matters**

*Details of applications are sent from NHDC as the Planning Authority to the Parish Council as a consultee. If any objections are raised either by a parishioner or a parish councillor an on-site meeting of the Parish Council's Planning Committee is convened to consider those items. See the notice board or contact the Clerk for agenda.*

**118.1 New consultations.**

**118.1.1** To note the Planning Committee meeting scheduled for Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March to include, NHDC Case Ref No: 17/00322/1. Land rear of 22, High Street.

Full Planning Permission: One 2 x bedroom bungalow with new access off Hodwell following levelling of site.

Applicant: Mr Brian Deal.

It was noted that for this item the planning meeting would convene outside 22 High Street.

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/01797/1 Land rear of 4-14, Claybush Road.

Full Planning Permission: 33 dwellings together with associated access, parking, amenity and open space.

Applicant: Croudace Homes.

It was noted that for this item the planning meeting would convene at the site entrance in Claybush Road.

The following were noted,

(i) the consultation letter received from NHDC with amended site plans.

(ii) the response from the NHDC Planning Officer to the Parish Council's request for clarification on the policy documents, particularly those included in the emerging Local Plan, to be considered as part of the application.

(iii) the acknowledgement of the Parish Council's response to the Herts Highways 'informal' consultation on the changes proposed by the developer to the 30mph limit location.

(iv) correspondence from parishioner John Hare.

Cllr Graham Lee reported that, in response to the concerns raised re the existence of palaeo-channels and the potential impact on water run-off, local residents, including himself, had approached a parishioner with professional expertise in such matters. This had resulted in a comprehensive report that challenged, in several key aspects, the report from the developer. The report had been passed to the NHDC Planning Officer.

See 118.7 below for further re the draft District Local Plan (site AS1/Land rear Claybush Road included in the draft document for residential development)

**118.1.2** NHDC Case Ref No: 17/00408/1LB 25 West End

Listed Building: Reinstatement of front door (non-functioning) to the street elevation.

It was noted that the applicant was known to some parish councillors and had previously been a parish councillor.

It was noted that no concerns or objections had been received either from parish councillors or members of the public.

It was **resolved** that a recommendation be made to the Conservation Officer to grant approval. **Clerk**

**118.2 Works to Trees in Conservation Area (TCA) or Tree Protection Orders (TPO).**

To review any applications to NHDC.

NHDC Case Ref. No. 17/00209/1TCA. 24-26 High Street.

Ash tree - reduce crown by 25%.

It was **resolved** that there were no objections. **Clerk**

NHDC Case Ref. No. 17/00419/1TCA. 11 Fordham Close.

Lime tree - removal.

It was **resolved** that there were no objections. **Clerk**

See also 118.6 below re planning conditions for trees at 18 Newnham Way.

**118.3 Applications pending NHDC decisions.**

NHDC Case Ref No:16/03047/1HH 15 Kingsland Way

Full Planning Permission Householder: Conversion and associated works to return existing 3-bed dwelling to 2x2-bed dwellings.

NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02863/1. Land rear of 39 - 59 Station Road.

Outline Application: Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) residential development comprising of 9 dwelling with associated access off Green Lane.

Applicant: Tingdene Homes Ltd.

It was noted that the Parish Council had recommended refusal on several grounds.

It was noted that this application would be determined at a meeting of the NHDC Planning Control Committee on 16th March 2017 (Spirella Ballroom, Bridge Road, Letchworth).

As no parish councillor was available to attend in person to make a verbal representation to the committee, it was agreed to request whether any of the local residents wished to do so. **Clerk**

**118.4 NHDC decisions on applications.** To note the following,

NHDC Case Ref No:16/03213/1HH The Laurels, 1 Broadchalke Close

Full Planning Permission Householder : Detached garden studio.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Bymolen.

NHDC decision: Standard Conditional Permission.

**118.5 (February Council, 106.5) NHDC Case Ref No: 16/02826/1PRE Land Off Station Road**

Pre-Application Advice : Residential Development

It was noted that there had been no further correspondence.

**118.6 Concerns re major works to Lime trees at 18 Newnham Way**

(Planning Committee, 6th August 2015 and February Council, 106.6)

NHDC Case Ref No: 15/01712/1. 18 Newnham Way

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated parking and amenity space at the rear of 18 Newnham Way (Arbury House) including alterations to existing access drive. Applicant: Mr and Mrs William Skelding.

The response from the NHDC Planning Officer to the Parish Council's request for action to be taken was noted, 'While it is undoubtedly regrettable that they have been so heavily pollarded I cannot see that the service of a Breach of Condition Notice would affect any kind of effective remedy'. It was understood that the Planning Officer had spoken to the applicant in relation to the report from the Planning Inspectorate and the condition imposed that required compliance with the submitted arboreal survey. The national Planning Inspector had stated, 'Views from the adjacent open countryside towards the appeal site would still largely continue to be dominated by the existing, dense rows of substantial mature trees along the north and west boundaries, which would also largely screen the dwelling from the surrounding countryside, even during the winter.' The NHDC Planning Officer had informed that, 'the condition will act in a similar way to a TPO going forward, namely that any significant works to identified trees must be applied for under s.73 (variation of a condition)'.

Following discussion it was agreed, albeit with reluctance by some parish councillors, that no further action be requested.

**118.7 District Local Plan 2011-31 (February Council, 106.7)**

Public consultation responded to in November 2016. It was reported that three emails had been received from the consultancy employed by NHDC to collate representations. These had acknowledged and summarised the Parish Council's response and offered the opportunity to make queries. It was agreed that clarification be sought as to what would be forwarded to the Inspector and to ensure that sufficient detail would be included. **Clerk**

### **119. Reports re Finance matters**

**119.1** Section 106 claims and grant proposals to NHDC. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that progress on funding proposals re the public toilets and the main pavilion building were pending collation of costings and plans; the resources available to do this had been limited due to the pressure of other work.

**119.2** Grounds maintenance contract for the pitches at the Recreation Ground. It was noted that quotes had been reviewed and a proposal was made to accept that from Brilliant Lawns based at Guilden Morden.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**119.3** Audit and end of financial year arrangements for 2016-17.

**119.3.1** Proposal to approve the annual review of the Risk Assessment Policy.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**119.3.2** Proposal to approve the Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2016-17.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be accepted.

**Clerk**

**119.3.3** The timetable for the Internal and External Audit 2016-17 was noted, ie report from the Internal Auditor and recommendation from the Finance and Management Joint Committee to be proposed to a full Council meeting followed by submission to the External Auditor for the audit date in July.

**119.4** Proposal for approval of monthly Accounts and Bills for Payment.

It was *resolved* that these be approved and paid (see Appendix 2).

**Clerk**

### **120. Reports re HR matters and the new office premises.**

**120.1** The appointment of Annie Clifford to the new role of Deputy Clerk from 1<sup>st</sup> April was noted. The Chairman welcomed her to the team.

**120.2** The vacancy following the resignation of the Environmental Cleansing Officer was noted. It was agreed that an advert for a replacement be compiled.

**MFL**

**120.3** Ashwell Housing Association (AHA) office at Bear Farm. Further communications with AHA and proposals for use of the space by the Parish Council were noted.

### **121. Reports from working groups**

**121.1** Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the latest surveys had been collated and a report was due. Notes of the group's meetings had been distributed.

**121.2** Website Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that the first draft of the new site had just been received; comments would be welcomed.

**121.3** Yearbook Group (leader Cllr David Short) Cllr David Short reported that the 2017 edition was at the printers. Volunteers to help deliver copies to all households and businesses would be welcomed. Leaflets for the At Home and the Music Festival would again be inserted.

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

*These items taken at 8.30pm; Standing Orders suspended to allow public participation.*

**122.1** School Governing Body. It was noted that a letter had been received from a parishioner with concerns about the number of available places at the school particularly with a number of new housing developments being proposed. A house sale had fallen through following the refusal to admit two children because the relevant classes were full. Cllr David Short (a school governor in his own right) reiterated his previous report that the school had been placed in financial difficulties due to the previous Published Access Number (PAN) being set at 38 pupils per class. This, combined with the statutory limit on class sizes of 30 for years 1 and 2, had been unsustainable. By reducing the PAN to 30, the significant number of children attending from Letchworth and Baldock would, over time, be reduced and the school would concentrate on providing for children from the traditional catchment area. It had been appreciated that this would have a negative impact in some cases whilst the new rules worked their way through.

**122.2** Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman (Chairman of the trustees in his own right) reported that the AGM would be held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March.

**122.3** Henry Colbron Trust. Cllr David Short (the Parish Council's representative and a school governor in his own right) reported that the school had requested funding for additional grounds works.

**122.4** Local business support. See item 116.1.3 above.

**122.5** Ashwell 1100 celebrations. Cllr David Short reported on the recent tree planting and further events planned throughout the year including during the At Home. A significant number of parishioners and local organisations were involved. There was no intention for any of the events to be fundraising and he proposed that the Parish Council set aside a modest sum to cover any costs that might be requested by the organisers. This was agreed. A proposal had already been made for new entrance signs to the village; costs were to be investigated.

**122.6** Great British Spring Clean/village litter pick event. Cllr Madeleine Legg reported that the initial response to adverts had been slow but in the last week there had been interest. She proposed a later date than the national event, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April. This would give more time for it to be organised and would be well-timed for the At Home. This was agreed.

**122.7** Items raised by parishioners.

**122.7.1** Parking. A parishioner proposed that residents should be encouraged to use their off-street parking places where they existed rather than cause congestion on the street. Also that bye-laws should be put in place to prevent householders with no off-street parking from owning cars.

**122.7.2** Re item 118.1 1 above (planning application Land rear of 4-14, Claybush Road).

Parishioner John Hare reported his view that provision of information to the applicant, Croudace Homes, by the NHDC Planning Officer, had been inappropriate. He had made a complaint to the NHDC Development and Conservation Manager who had provided him with information to access the official complaints procedure at NHDC. Parishioner John Hare had also copied his complaint to District Councillor Janine Paterson and Sir Oliver Heald, MP. Following advice he had also taken his complaint to District Councillor David Levett and the CEO of NHDC. To date he had not received a response from NHDC. Parish councillors advised him to pursue the official NHDC complaints procedure.

**122.8** The Chairman reminded all that the Annual Parish Meeting was to be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 8pm in the Big Hall at the school.

**Items 123, 124 and 125. Meeting closed to the public at 9.25pm for two *in camera* items**

*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.*

To be considered at an *in camera* session on the grounds that included personnel and financial matters.

**Meeting closed at 9.35pm**

**Forthcoming meeting dates:**

**Planning Committee meeting Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March (see 118.1 above)**

**Next monthly Council meeting Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April.**

**The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

**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.

## Appendix 2

ACCOUNTS AND BILLS FOR PAYMENT -March 2017				1st March 2017	
				Declarations: None	
Proposed (i) Cllr Hoffman (ii) Cllr Legg					
				£	£
				Precept	Grants
				Other	Total
<b>Receipts</b>					
71	Santander	bank interest		2.58	2.58
72	Neville Funeral Service	chapel rent		68.75	68.75
73	Dignity Funerals Ltd	Crouch burial (cemetery works 17.04)		670.00	670.00
	<b>Total</b>		0.00	0.00	741.33
				Admin, office costs & Other Misc	Management of Parish Assets & Amenities
					VAT
					Total
<b>Payments</b>					
<b>By Direct Debit</b>					
220	E.ON (01/03/17)	chapel electricity		11.00	11.00
221	BT (20/02/2017)	office phone and broadband	175.44		210.52
222	Anglian Water (22/02/2017)	pavilion sewerage		33.81	33.81
223	Affinity Water (01/03/17)	pavilion water		30.99	30.99
224	E.ON (12/02/17)	pavilion electricity		28.10	29.51
<b>By cheque</b>					
225	J C M Porter	Clerk's salary	1162.39		1162.39
226	J C M Porter	reimbursement office expenses	132.26		148.25
227	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account,	clerk's pension	402.70		402.70
228	M Barden	Environmental Cleansing		470.14	470.14
229	M Chandler	Duties at Pavilion and Rec		89.20	89.20
230	Post Office	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	165.60	100.00	265.60
231	K Clifford	Premises duties		30.00	30.00
232	Concord Trophies and Sportswe	tree plaque Ashwell 1100	50.00		60.00
233	Clockwise Restorations	motor for parish clock		807.65	807.65
234	St Mary's Ashwell PCC	parish room hire (Jan-Dec 2017)	144.00		144.00
235	The Liberty Co Ltd	toilets cleaning (02/01-29/01)		128.00	153.60
236	Parkes Print & Design	Neighbourhood Plan survey print			739.97
237	St Mary's Ashwell PCC	annual donation re Ashwell Village Ne	125.00		125.00
238	Ashwell Village Sports Day	from allocated reserve (Ashwell Show	150.00		150.00
239	Mr Rufus Talks	Neighbourhood Plan survey work	200.00		200.00
	<b>Total</b>		2707.39	1728.89	5,264.33
<b>Outstanding Accounts</b>					
Yearbook 2016 adverts (xl)					65.00
	<b>Total</b>				65.00
<b>Money at bank</b>					
Current Account				01 March 2017	33,421.75
Deposit Account				03 February 2017	30,453.62
	<b>Total</b>				63,875.37
<i>Cheques banked after/BACS transfers after</i>					670.00
<i>Cheques drawn but not cleared/DD's outstanding</i>					1,231.40
<i>Total</i>					63,313.97
<i>Total after paying this months cheques</i>					58,049.64
<i>Total in current a/c after paying this months cheques</i>					27,596.02