

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 5th October 2022, at 7pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Martin Hoffman, Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman) and David Sims. Four councillors joined the meeting on Zoom; Cath Connolly (unwell), Ian Duffy (other commitment), Vinny Hall (unwell) and Mark White (other commitment).

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Al Jacoutot (IT support) and District Councillor Tom Tyson. County Councillor Steve Jarvis had given his apologies. Two members of the public were present and two also joined on Zoom.

Following a request from a parishioner it was agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

41 Apologies for absence from parish councillors. Cllr Gemma Allan (other commitment).

42 Declarations of interest. None.

43 Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting 7th September 2022. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted. **Action: Clerk/Graham**

44 OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE MATTERS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC

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

44.1 Items from members of the public. The following matters were raised.

41.1 Post office service in the Parish Room/concerns about the frequency of service closures. It was understood that these had been due to equipment failure and staff sickness. The report that the Steeple Morden post office was to close was noted.

41.2 Bygrave solar farm (*see also 44.2.2 below*). The parishioner expressed his support for the application.

41.3 The Ruddery/proposal to restrict vehicular access (*see also 44.3. below*). HCC had progressed the first stage of the process. **County Councillor Steve Jarvis** had informed that the previous rights of way officer had since retired and the matter had now been picked up by a more senior officer.

41.4 Lynx bus service. Favourable reports had been received. **County Councillor Steve Jarvis** had informed that he was in dialogue to extend the operating hours.

41.5 Doctors' Surgery. Concerns had been raised re Ashwell patients being directed to Bassingbourn and staffing issues. Chairman Graham Lee reported that he was still an

ongoing member of the Patients Liaison Group and was aware that recent personnel changes had resulted in some improvements. A new telephone system had now been funded and installation was awaited.

- 41.6 Traffic cones on the corner of High Street and Gardiners Lane. It was understood that these had been placed by a local resident; this would be investigated. **Action: Clerk**

44.2 Items from our district councillor Tom Tyson.

44.2.1 New footway in Station Road as a condition of planning permission for Townsend Meadow. This was currently in the hands of Highways to liaise with the developer.

44.2.2 Bygrave Solar Farm. Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave NHC ref. 22/00741/FP. No date had yet been set for the NHC Planning Committee to consider this.

44.2.3 NHC consultation on waste and recycling services. Some 3,500 responses had been received and a report had been made to the relevant NHC committee; this was due to go to NHC Cabinet later in the month. It was noted that the Parish Council was in dialogue with NHC and was undertaking a review of the services provided to Ashwell including emptying of the litter bins and street cleansing.

44.2.4 NHC consultation on their review of the Ashwell Conservation Area. Chairman Graham Lee requested information on whether NHC & their consultant would incorporate the contents of the document submitted by David Short highlighting some 300 points of historical inaccuracy of which c 100 were considered significant. The Parish Council's support for this was noted, in the main to avoid a repetition of the inaccuracies that were in the Ashwell Character Statement. District Councillor Tom Tyson agreed to raise this with NHC officers.

44.2.5 NHC consultation on Council tax Reduction Scheme. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction-scheme-consultation>. The explanation on the NHC website of how this scheme operated was noted.

44.2.6 NHC Local Plan Inspector's Report. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/north-herts-local-plan-inspectors-report-received-0>. This had now been received by NHC; the delay had been due to deliberations over housing for Luton and Stevenage. NHC members had been briefed and it was due to be considered by the full NHC Council in November; if approved this would give the 'green light' to major developments at Baldock.

44.3 Items from our county councillor Steve Jarvis. Apologies and reports received were noted.

44.3.1 Safer routes to the station/Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) public consultation. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/have-your-say-walking-and-cycling-routes>. Chairman Graham Lee reported that publicity material had been received; this would be distributed encouraging residents to respond in support of the route to Ashwell & Morden Station.

Action: Clerk

44.3.2 Public transport to the station/Lynx 'on-demand' service. *See 41.4 above.*

44.3.3 The Ruddery. Update on the request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. *See 41.3 above.*

44.3.4 Highways works in Station Road and Lucas Lane. No further information.

44.4 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

44.4.1 Community Land Trust/Community Benefit Society. Chairman Graham Lee reported that the solicitor had submitted the required documents to the FCA.

44.4.2 Village Hall trustees/re their proposal to change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council. Nothing further to report; the solicitor had again been chased up for a response.

44.5 Items from working groups.

Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported that the trees and hedge planting were recovering well from the drought.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated.

45 MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS. *See also Appendix C below.*

45.1 Recreation Ground/new equipment for older children. Nothing further to report.

45.2 Pavilion upgrade /Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fundraising. Chairman Graham Lee reported that publicity had gone out via the website and the Village News. A bid was to be made to the Ashwell Show. Advice was being sought as to whether Gift Aid through the Recreation Ground charity (Allotment for Exercise and Recreation) would have implications for VAT reclaim permissible by a parish council.

45.3 Parish clock/fault repairs and annual service. Repairs to the chimes was in hand by the supplier but pending delivery of a part.

45.4 Grounds maintenance. The main areas supplier had withdrawn from the contract due to issues during the drought. Options for the future were being explored.

45.5 Small Gains/rabbit problems/unkept allotments/Accies Portaloo. Following expert advice re options for rabbit control a ferreter was to be commissioned later in the month; they would also attend to problems at the Cemetery. Letters were to be sent to tenants of unkempt allotments. No objections were raised to the Accies request to install a Portaloo so long as it was positioned safely.

45.6 Springs/Greening Ashwell working parties. Cllr Martin Hoffman applauded the group's input. Quotes for tree works over the autumn/winter were being sought.

46 PLANNING MATTERS

Full documents are available on the NHC website. Put the NHC ref. no. into the planning search box <https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/>

46.1 New consultations received from North Herts Council.

- 46.1.1 32 West End. NHC ref. 22/02163/FPH (Amended). Two storey side extension to include integrated garage following demolition of existing side extension and existing detached garage. Amendments received by NHC 21/09/2022 'Footprint amended to achieve a 1000mm path between the proposed extension and eastern boundary'.

Standing Orders suspended for public contributions.

The resident of the neighbouring house, no. 30 West End, voiced his objections to the application [see also NHC website: Planning application/comments]. These included the harm to the amenity of his property due to the size, shape, scale, proximity and resulting overbearingness and loss of light. The feeling of space within this part of the Conservation Area would be harmed along with loss of light through these spaces. Concerns existed re the Apple tree and potential harm to biodiversity. There were also issues with defects in the application drawings; amendments had been submitted but inaccuracies remained. The understood intended use by the applicant was also of concern.

District Councillor Tom Tyson reported that there had been faults with the original drawings submitted that had since been amended. However, concerns still existed re some aspects of their accuracy.

Standing Orders reinstated.

It was noted that issues raised by the neighbour were valid and matters such as privacy, scale, light, impact on the conservation area should be considered. Parish councillors expressed their concerns at making any judgment on plans that were not believed to be accurate and/or were lacking detail. Although individual councillors had made site visits and photos had been circulated, issues such as the relative heights of nos. 30 and 32 remained.

Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan: Cllr Norton Mahy noted that there were no particular policy implications other than the possible advantage of the proposed secondary occupation.

A proposal was made that no response could be made to the NHC consultation based on plans believed to be inaccurate and/or lacking relevant information.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted and the NHC Planning Officer informed.

Action: Clerk

- 46.1.1 1 High Street. NHC ref 22/02425/FPH. Full Permission Householder: Alterations to existing windows, insertion of rooflights to existing front and side roof-slopes, render and boarding to existing facade.

The concerns raised by a local resident re the proposed rendering being out of character with other houses in the vicinity was noted [see also NHC website: Planning application/comments].

A proposal was made that no objections be made.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted and the NHC Planning Officer informed.

Action: Clerk

- 46.1.1 Slip End Farm, Royston Road. NHC ref. 22/01541/FP. (Amended). Full Planning Permission: Replace existing entrance gates with acoustic gates, decommission existing vehicular access and install protective landscape bund to boundary.

It was noted that Herts Highways and Historic England had requested fuller information following the original application. Highways concerns had included practical matters such as drainage; these had now been satisfied. Historic England had requested a full archaeological report due to the location within an Area of Archaeological Significance and proximity to the Scheduled Ancient Monument, Ring ditches at Slip End. This had now been supplied and Historic England had made no objections.

A proposal was made that no objections be made.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted and the NHC Planning Officer informed.

Action: Clerk

- 46.1 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC

- 46.1.1 Spring House, 7 High Street. NHC ref. 22/02580/TPO. Mature Ash - Reduce two lowest limbs over property side by 3m to suitable growth points. 2x Lime - Crown lift to 5m.

The NHC Planning Officer had been requested to clarify the apparent TPO status. A proposal was made that there were no objections to the works proposed.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted and the NHC Planning Officer informed.

Action: Clerk

- 46.1 Updates on previous planning applications, developments ongoing. None reported.

47 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

- 47.1 The latest budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts were noted.

It was resolved that these be accepted. *See Appendix A below.*

Action: Clerk

- 47.2 Audit 2021-22. The report from the External Auditor for was noted; the required publicity had been undertaken.

- 47.3 Budget and precept for 2023-24. The timetable for setting these was noted including the meeting to be held on Tuesday 11th October.

- 47.4 Request from St Mary's PCC for £1,000 to support their hosting of the outreach post office service in the Parish Room. It was noted that the Post Office paid no rent for hosting of such services as the cost would make them unviable. The same amount had been granted to the PCC in previous years and provision had been made under the section 137 'community support' budget category for any village groups requesting financial assistance this year. Chairman Graham Lee reported that a date was to be scheduled for a meeting with PCC representatives to discuss the Parish Council's costs for the Churchyard grounds maintenance and the Parish Clock. A proposal was made that a grant of £1,000 be made.

It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk

47.5 Replacement IT equipment. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that the current equipment was out-of-date and not adequate to take the software proposed to support the in-house aspects of the Yearbook production; there was a budget allocation for office equipment. It was noted that quotes had been obtained and proposals circulated to parish councillors.

It was resolved that the preferred quote be accepted.

Action: Clerk

47.6 Yearbook design and print. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that three quotes had been obtained; it was noted that these had been circulated to parish councillors. He had also had face-to-face meetings with potential suppliers.

It was resolved that the preferred quote be accepted assuming that the reference raised no issues of concern.

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed at 20.30

Forthcoming meeting dates: November Council Wednesday 2nd, 7pm.

Appendix A: Monthly accounts summary.

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 30th September 2022					
RECEIPTS				£	
40	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (Septembert)		68.75	
41	NHC	2nd half payment parish precept		41,175.00	
42	Santander	Reserve Account Interest		4.49	
			Total	£41,248.24	
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
120	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (July)	25.00	5.00	30.00
121	Castle Water	Pavilion water 01/07/22 - 31/12/2022	55.98		55.98
122	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Toilets cleaning and consumables August Inv No 2412	237.50		237.50
123	Gearing Locksmith	Supply and fit key safe at pavilion	120.00	24.00	144.00
124	Eon Next	Electricity toilets at pavilion 01-31 Aug22	12.44	0.62	13.06
125	Brilliant Lawns	Fertiiser application to Rec pitches Inv 10277	479.65		479.65
126	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	529.08		529.08
127	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	920.73		920.73
128	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	244.00		244.00
129	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	175.60		175.60
130	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,457.98		1,457.98
131	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	775.47		775.47
		Sub-totals	5,033.43	29.62	
				Total	£5,063.05
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 30/09/2022	£47,547.37		
		Reserve Account 30/09/2022	£52,812.08		
		Total cash	£100,359.45		

Appendix B: Monthly Planning Summary

<i>Signed</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 5th October 2022				
To view all the documents relating to an application put the NHC reference number into the planning searchbox https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/				
Address	Application ref. Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC response to NHC consultation	North Herts Decision
32 West End	22/02163/FPH AMENDED -see below	Two storey side extension to include integrated garage following demolition of existing side extension and existing detached garage.	October Council 46.1.1 Response held due to concerns re inaccurate/lacking information	Pending
1 High Street	22/02425/FPH	Alterations to existing windows, insertion of rooflights to existing front and side roof-slopes, render and boarding to existing facade.	October Council 46.1.2 No objection	Pending
Slip End Farm, Royston Road	22/01541/FP AMENDED -see below	Replace existing entrance gates with acoustic gates, decommission existing vehicular access and install protective landscape bund to boundary.	October Council 46.1.3 No objection	Pending
Land Adjacent To 4, Ashwell Street	22/01844/S73	Section 73 Application : Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 22/00880/FP granted on 29/06/2022 - Erection of a detached 3 bedroom dwelling, and detached car port; ancillary works and new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street as shown on plans 21-005 Rev I and 20/005/101/D.	PC to NHDC: No Objection September council, 39.1.1	Pending
Spring House 7 High Street	22/02161/FPH and 22/02062/LBC	Replace three existing front elevation gates.	PC to NHDC: No Objection September council, 39.1.2	Pending
9 Philosophers Gate	22/02070/FPH	Retention of detached garden outbuilding.	PC to NHDC: No Objection September council, 39.1.3	Lawful Development Certificate 08/09/2022
32 West End	22/02163/FPH	Two storey side extension to include integrated garage following demolition of existing side extension and existing detached garage.	PC to NHDC: No Objection September council, 39.1.4	Pending
Land to the east of 35 Ashwell Street	22/01847/S73	Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 20/02309/FP granted on 08.12.2020 - Erection of 1 x 3 bed detached single storey dwelling including basement and light-well as shown on plans.	PC to NHDC: Objection August council, 32.1.1	Pending
Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP (amendments to original -see below)	Erection of two detached dwellings (1 x 2-bed and 1 x 4-bed) including alterations to existing vehicular access (amended plans received 16.06.2022).	PC to NHDC: Objection July council, 25.1.1	Pending
Slip End Farm, Royston Road	22/01541/FP	Replace existing entrance gates with acoustic gates, decommission existing vehicular access and install protective landscape bund to boundary.	PC to NHDC: No Objection July council, 25.1.2	Pending
Land east of 35 Ashwell Street	22/01191/S73	Variation of Condition 2 (layout and external alterations) of planning permission 20/02309/FP granted 08.12.2020	PC to NHDC: No Objection June council, 18.1.2	Pending
Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	Full Planning Permission: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.	PC to NHDC: Objection June Council, 18.1.4	Pending
Land to the West of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP	Erection of 2 detached dwellings (1 x 2 bed & 1 x 4 bed) including alterations to existing vehicular access	PC to NHDC: Objection October council 2021, 50.1.1	Pending

APPENDIX C: Additional premises matters ongoing (see also item 44 above)

Signed

Date

New litter bins at the Springs/supplier to replace faulty units.
New dog waste bin for Ashwell Street/now installed.
Pavilion security upgrade/completed.
Pavilion electricity/replacement of faulty meter completed.
New seat at the Rec/pending replacement fittings from supplier.
Small Gains water supply upgrade/pending quotes.
Springs additional fencing/pending quotes.
Springs tree works/pending quotes and conservation area permission.
Playground and Springs RoSPA inspection/pending report.
Regular tree surveys/pending quotes.

Signed

Date