

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 01 May 2024, at 7.00pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Graham Lee (Chair), Norton Mahy (Vice chair), Chris Button, Ian Duffy, Martin Hoffman and David Sims.

Also in attendance: Acting Clerk Jane Porter, Deputy Clerk Nicky Forrester, Trainee Clerk Sally Roberts. Six members of the public were present and two joined on Zoom. District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis gave their apologies.

The meeting was recorded on Zoom by the Parish Council and also by a parishioner. Please see the website for the audio recording and for the appendices issued with the agenda and referred to in the minutes. [2024 Meeting Minutes and Agendas](#)

- 1 Election of Chair** *To receive a proposal for the council year 2024/25 and signature of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.*
Graham Lee was proposed Chair by Cllr Hoffman which was seconded by Cllr Mahy. Cllr Lee signed Chairmans Declaration of Office. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.
- 2 Election of Vice Chair** *To receive a proposal for the council year 2024/25 and signature of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.*
Norton Mahy was proposed Vice Chair by Cllr Lee and seconded by the remaining Councillors. Cllr Mahy signed Vice Chairmans Declaration of Office. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.
- 3 Apologies for absence** *To receive and accept apologies for absence. To agree any long-term absence from meetings to comply with the 'six month rule' (Local Government Act 1972).*
Cllr Hall remains unwell and may not be back to Council for some months. Cllr Lee proposed that a Dispensation to attend meetings is granted which Cllr Hoffman seconded. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.
- 4 Interests** Declaration of Interest was received from Cllr Duffy in respect of item 11.1.3 planning application by his close relative for 1 Woodforde Close. Cllr Lee has an ongoing Dispensation from the April meeting to report on Zero Carbon Ashwell.
- 5 Meeting dates for 2024-25** Full Council Meetings will continue to be held on the 1st Wednesday of each month except for Christmas/New Year and Finance Committee Meetings. Proposed dates for these will be sent to Cllrs outside of the meeting. Planning Committee Meetings to be held on an ad-hoc basis.
- 6 Parish councillor responsibilities and representatives** [Council Leadership Task List](#) The tasks assigned to Cllr Vinny were discussed and Cllr Hoffman kindly agreed to take on further tasks of The Lock Up, Carters Pond & Merchant Taylors Green, in addition to St Mary's Churchyard

grounds maintenance and PCC liaison. Cllr Lee thanked Cllr Hoffman. Drivesafe, Herts Highways, HCC Rights of Way, Street Cleansing, Finance and Planning in which Cllr Vinny is also involved is covered by other Councillors.

6.1 **Moss Cottage Homes.** [Moss Cottage](#) The Council are happy to agree the appointment of new trustee Stephen Fleming along with the reappointment of two existing trustees Phillida Shaw and Ann Robertshaw both of whom are willing to stand again for election. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

7 **Council Documents** To review, propose and agree any changes.

7.1 [What the Council does and how it operates](#)

7.2 [Financial Regulations](#) It was agreed that the Financial Regulations should be reviewed so that the Clerk and Chair may approve expenditure from the agreed budget up to £1500 per item (from £500) without reference to full Council. This is to cover items such as H&S issues which may arise in between Council meetings where immediate action is required. The decision took into account inflation and that the policy had not been reviewed for several years. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

7.3 [Council Standing Orders](#) These were reviewed but no changes took place.

7.4 [Budgets & Audits](#) To note other documents to be included as part of the Internal Audit review at the June Council meeting.

The following items are routine Parish Council business

8 **Minutes** [Draft Minutes April 2024](#) Cllr Mahy proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings which was seconded by all Cllrs. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

9 **Parish Issues and Public Participation** [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)

Standing Orders were suspended.

9.1 To note the following ongoing consultations/surveys, responses to date and agree any actions.

9.1.1 [Consultation on the Outreach Post Office service](#) Clerk to chase deadline date.

9.1.2 [Right Bin, Right Place](#) Deputy Clerk in consultation with NHC re which bins will be serviced and if any bins should be removed/serviced at a cost to the village.

9.1.3 [Playground Improvement Consultation](#) Ongoing

9.1.4 [Affordable Housing Survey](#) Deadline date has been extended to 31st May 2024

9.1.5 [Consultation on the pavilion and public toilets upgrade - Renovation or Replacement](#)
It was reported that the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerks met with an Architect from the village who had volunteered to assist with proposals which in turn will be made available to the public.

9.2 **To note any police matters.** The cost of the 20s Plenty posters is hoped to be shared between the Parish Council, Police and County/District Council. It was proposed to reduce the number of posters and have a mix of A1 and A2 boards due to space obstructing

pedestrians. The quote is approximately £360 ex VAT and the cost to the village would be budgeted under Section 137 provision with approximate cost to village of £120.

- 9.3 **To hear any new matters** The Chairman stated that the public session was limited to a total of 15 minutes with each person allocated 3 minutes in which to address their items, as per the Councils Standing Orders.

One parishioner spoke on the following topics, an incorrect link in the agenda, Affordable Housing publicity to include a mention of self build (see item 9.1.4) and matters regarding the Pavilion, (see item 9.1.5).

- 9.4 To receive reports from representatives from outside bodies, local authorities and agencies.

9.4.1 Report from Steve Jarvis, County Councillor:

Highways to remove dropped curb in an effort to resolve pooling of water near the Memorial near the junction of Station Road and Lucas Lane. In addition the proposal for bollards is under consideration.

The 30mph speed limited signage which was erected by Highways near the locality of Springhead is to be replaced by 20mph signage. Cllr Steve Jarvis is addressing with Highways.

- 9.4.2 To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson - TBA

Standing Orders were reinstated.

10 **Reports from Working Groups.**

- 10.1 **Litter Picking** An event took place on Saturday 20 April arranged by Cllr Mahy with 13 routes covered by volunteers out of 18 potential routes. The weather was dismal and thanks are given to those who volunteered. A pleasing result in all.

- 10.2 **Planning Advisory** Cllr Mahy has been dealing unsuccessfully with NHC but will now talk to the District Councillor regarding this case under Section 106. Case studies would be helpful to work out a persuasive argument in favour of the village.

- 10.3 **Access to Ashwell station** No further progress but Cllr Lee will chase prior to next meeting.

- 10.4 **Trees and Hedges** Cllr Sims said that the saplings alongside the football area of the Recreation Ground are being damaged. The approximate cost of a fencing stretch to cover an area of approx. 60m is circa £1000. There is no specific money for this but it was agreed that the monies could be taken from the Recreation Ground budget. Cllr Button proposed the expenditure which was seconded by all Councillors. **Action: Clerk**

- 10.5 **Yearbook 2024 edition** Cllr Mahy advised that the yearbook has been mainly distributed with a small outstanding task of giving a copy to some advertisers outside of the village. The 2025 edition is now ongoing. **Action: Clerk**

- 10.6 **Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) group.** Cllr Lee is pleased with the progress of the group and reported that it is holding monthly meetings and progressing with the design of a leaflet. Other members have almost completed the Stage One application from Energy One feasibility study. The aim is to send a draft document to a Consultant to advise on the application and obtain feedback on quality and missing information to complete prior to going for formal assessment. The grant application needs to be signed by a Proper Officer and the Clerk will be asked to sign on behalf of the PC.

10.7 **Village Sports Day 19th May 2024** The organiser of the sports day has completed the risk assessment which has been submitted to the Insurance Company for clarification that the event is covered by our existing policy.

11 **Planning matters: to include new and existing applications.** [NHC Planning Portal](#)

11.1 New consultations received from NHC.

11.1.1 **80 Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 24/00651/FPH.** *Full Permission Householder: Two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, front porch extension and raised rear decking area following demolition of existing garage. See also April council item 127.1.2.*

This is a repeat application granted 4 years ago but not actioned, this is now being resubmitted. The PC objected previously as the rear of the building overshadowed neighbours homes and also appeared dominant. However the Planning Committee approved the application. Nothing on the new application has changed, and there have been no neighbours objections. Cllr Mahy suggested the PC respond to the application to state that extending a 2 bed dwelling to a 4 bed dwelling goes against the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the housing mix which is a new factor since the original application/PC objection. Therefore the PC objection still stands, with the Neighbour Plan to support it, adding that this is in a conservation area and not consistent with its surroundings. Cllr Lee proposed we write our objections as such and this was seconded by the Councillors. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

11.1.2 **Slip End Farm, Royston Road, Slip End. NHC ref. 24/00754/FP.** *Full Planning Permission : Erection of two 3-bed, three 4-bed and two 5-bed dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, parking, garaging and private gardens following the demolition of existing agricultural barns.* This site sits on the edge of the village adjacent to the A505 and is redundant agricultural land. There was originally an application given approval to develop the existing barns near the site. This new application is to erect 7 dwellings and goes against the Neighbourhood Plan housing mix.

Cllr Button suggested that the PC object on the grounds that this has not been dealt with as a Class Q and also falls foul of the Neighbourhood Plan in it's housing mix and recommends this should be called in for decision by an NHC Planning Committee. Cllr Lee proposed that the PC writes to the Planning Officer setting out the views expressed by Parish Councillors and to request that these be taken into account, in particular the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. This was seconded by the Councillors. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

11.1.3 **1 Woodforde Close. NHC ref. 24/00737/FPH.** *Full Permission Householder : First floor side extension and replace existing rear ground floor flat roof with a mono-pitched roof. Insertion of rear ground floor bifolding doors and recladding to front elevation.*

Standing Orders were suspended whist a resident spoke to present their proposals. Cllr Duffy left the room due to a Declaration of Interest.

The applicant stated that they are wanting to extend for their family's needs and looked at various options. They believe this is the modest option which does not affect green space/trees and leaves parking for two cars. Weatherboarding will be natural materials. There have been objections from neighbours regarding noise

transfer. The dwelling is in a conservation area and in accordance with this the front and cohesiveness of the structure and elevation in relation to neighbouring properties should be considered.

- 11.1.4 Ashridge Farm Cottage. NHC ref. 24/00862/S73. Variation to Condition No 2 (amend drawings) of planning permission 22/02795/FPH granted on 06.01.2023.** The application is a revision not a new application. Minor amendments have been made to slightly shrink the 1st floor level. This was discussed and reviewed and the Council has no objection. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

Standing Orders were reinstated

Cllr Mahy said it wasn't apparent on the application of the impact to neighbours light, along with taking the property into a 4-5 bed dwelling which is inconsistent with the Neighbourhood Plan. He added that Woodforde Close is an example of it's time and age and making the suggested changes would have an impact taking into consideration its location to the Close.

Cllr Button felt it unfair to a growing family to not be given support providing that consideration is taken regarding neighbours potential loss of light, increase in noise/sound and matters relating to privacy, otherwise he would have no objections. Cllr Lee added that the dwelling is in the conservation area.

Cllr Button proposed that the PC write to the Planning Officer to state they have no objection providing the above factors are taken into consideration when making their decision. This was seconded by 3 other Cllrs. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.

11.2 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO)

- 11.2.1 Land Adjacent To 28, Hodwell.** This is a significant area of woodland by Duck Lake House. The work is intended to tidy up the woodland and enhance biodiversity with some trees deemed better removed and some replanting takes place as per their report by a professional body. Cllr Lee proposed we go back to the Planning Officer to draw their attention to the amount of timber to be removed and query if this needs a licence along with the potential impact on wildlife to ensure adequate protection is taken for bats, and birds nesting season etc. The Clerk was asked to approach a local village expert for their advice. It was resolved the proposal be accepted.

Action: Clerk

11.3 Tree consultations. Responses already made to the Planning Officer

- 11.3.1 Ashwell Primary School, Silver Street, Ashwell. NHC ref. 24/00857/TCA.** Various works including removal – the no objection response was noted.

- 11.3.2 9 Woodforde Close. NHC ref. 24/00775/TPO.** Ash Tree - Reduction of the tree rather than the removal, the no objection response was noted.

11.4 Concerns re the removal of trees at Claybush Hill Meadow (see action point February council 109.4). No further correspondence received.

- 11.5 To note the Planning Summary as of 24 April 2024. [Summary of recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC](#)**

12 Reports from Committees

- 12.1 **HR Committee.** Proposal to add Nicky Forrester, Deputy Clerk to the Pension Scheme from April 2024. Councillors in agreement. It was resolved that the proposal be accepted.
- 13 **Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities.** To receive oral reports and agree any actions needed.
- 13.1 **The Springs.** Cllr Hoffman gave his report and is satisfied with the progression of the Springs Festival proposal. A YouTube Video has been produced by a young lady which he said was outstanding and requested it be added to the Ashwell website. Clerk to action.
Action: Clerk
- 13.2 **St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance.** Cllr Hoffman stated there is nothing to report.
- 13.3 **Recreation Ground including the playground, pavilion and public toilets.** Previously covered above.
- 13.4 **Small Gains (Accies pitch and allotments).** Previously covered above.
- 13.5 **War Memorial.** Previously covered above.
- 13.6 **Cemetery.** The Clerk applauded the Deputy Clerk for her handling of many cases recently in what has been the busiest period for many years. The Deputy Clerk attended an ICCM nationally accredited cemetery management course recently and will debrief the Clerk and Trainee Clerk.
Action: Deputy Clerk
- 13.7 **Street furniture.**
- 13.7.1 **Litter bin review.** The bins on the street are owned by the Parish Council and are not the property of NHC. NHC need to advise which bins will continued to be serviced and they have agreed to consult with the Deputy Clerk.
- 13.7.2 **Seats.** The Woman's Institute is installing a seat but there is a long delivery date on these items. Deputy Clerk to chase. Seat for Small Gains, and budget for seats to be considered. Cllr Button to look at with Cllr Sims.

14 Finance and Governance

- 14.1 **Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts.** The new accounting system is progressing. Items will now be electronically approved and a summary will be published with the minutes. Proposal that the summary of receipts and payments be issued with the draft minutes and the two nominated Parish Councillors sign off the accounts in accordance with internal control procedures.
- 14.2 **Audit for the 2023-24 financial year.** The target date is that for all documents to come to the June Council Meeting as the deadline for them to go to the External Auditor at the beginning of July.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 05 June 2024, 7pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm