

## Minutes

### of the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021

Present: Parish Councillors Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman), Martin Hoffman and David Sims.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne). District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Two members of the public joined on Zoom.

**52.** Apologies for absence. Mark White (family commitment), Gemma Allan (other commitment). These were noted and approved.

**53.** Declarations of Interest. None.

**54.** Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021. This was approved. **Action: Graham/Clerk**

### **55. OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC** *Standing Orders suspended to allow members of the public to speak.*

#### **55.1 Items from members of the public.**

**55.1.1** Defibrillators in Ashwell. In response to a question it was confirmed that in addition to the unit in the old telephone box in the High Street, the Accies football club had recently applied for additional units at Small Gains and the Recreation Ground; this had been supported by the Parish Council.

**55.1.2** Hedge cutting. A question was put as to whether local farmers and landowners could be asked to review their hedge cutting regimes to be more wildlife friendly both in terms of how much and when hedges were cut. Parish councillors were of the view that this was a laudable objective and the parishioner agreed to identify relevant locations. Expert advice on how to improve biodiversity would be sought. A view was expressed that this might be something that the Greening Ashwell group could pursue.

**55.1.3** NHDC Waste/recycling vehicle. A parishioner reported that they had experienced an incident in which they claimed the driver had acted aggressively; they had taken the matter up and were awaiting a response.

**55.2** North Herts District Council (NHDC). District Councillor Tom Tyson reported.  
(i) Lynx bus service. This was up and running, reports received had been good and he had used the service himself. The relevant NHDC officer had responded to questions that he had put regarding any possible capacity and coverage issues. Additional vehicles were scheduled to come into service next year.

(ii) NHDC free tree offer. This was ongoing and details were on the website.  
(iii) Bygrave Woods events. This had been an item at the latest NHDC Licensing Committee which he had attended. The NHDC licensing manager had included in his report details that had been passed on of the discussions with local residents and businesses on the difficulties experienced. The licensing officer had assured him that he would provide information on proposed future events when details were submitted to NHDC. The notice period was three months for smaller events and six months for larger events. These assurances were in addition to those he had received from the landowner that forward notice would be given. The number and size of events for next year was currently unknown; the license did not specify the number permitted.

District Cllr Tom Tyson was asked to request what review processes existed for the license and whether the number of events could be controlled.

(iv) Damage to the wall in Swan Street. The latest email from his contact at Urbaser (the NHDC contractor who had admitted liability for the damage) had informed that as the supplier they had commissioned to undertake the repairs had gone out of business the matter would now be progressed via the respective insurers of both parties, ie Urbaser and the property owner. The identity of the latter was unknown. It was reiterated that the only reason for public authority involvement in what was essentially a private matter was the unsightly nature of the damaged wall in the middle of the village. It was noted that the other boundary wall of the property in Gardiners Lane was in a dilapidated state. Parish councillors expressed the view that NHDC should be more assiduous in ensuring that their contractors acted more swiftly and efficiently to resolve such matters. District Cllr Tom Tyson was praised for his input.

*See also item 50 re Planning.*

### **55.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).**

County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported.

(i) West End chicane. The further safety audit work had now been completed so installation works should now be progressed.

(ii) Hodwell drains. These had been cleared but further works were planned.

(iii) Highways tree officer. The issue in Bacons Yard had now been sorted and requests re Lucas Lane and in the twitchel from High Street to Silver Street were to be looked into.

(iv) Yellow line parking restrictions. Signage issues were to be addressed. A meeting was to be arranged to consider new lines at the Springhead/High Street and Ashwell Street/Claybush Road junctions. A request was made to include the Ashwell Street/Chalk Bank Close junction.

(v) Station Road safety improvements. In response to a question from Cllr David Sims, the understanding was that these would be installed in this financial year.

### **55.4 Any items from parish councillors (see below for premises reports)**

The Chairman, Graham Lee, reported.

#### **55.4.1 Greening Ashwell group.**

(i) A letter of complaint had been received from the parishioner who had previously led the group. This had been acknowledged and the content was to be considered.

(ii) The new leaders of the group had written to the Parish Council and informed that they now had a new committee and were pursuing various matters. This included encouraging other members of the community to get involved and identifying potential locations for tree planting. They had asked the Parish Council for advice on land ownership on an informal basis. The Parish Council had welcomed their approach and reiterated that they would be pleased to assist where possible.

**55.4.2** Ashwell Doctors' Surgery. The next meeting of the Ashwell & Bassingbourn Patients Group, in which the Parish Council would participate, was scheduled for the first week of December. Positive comments had been received re new arrangements at the Surgery in particular the availability of face-to-face appointments at Ashwell.

**55.4.3** Dixies Meadow/advertisement for sale. Information gathering on various options was still ongoing. The assurance that public consultation would take place before any action was taken was reiterated.

**55.4.4** The Ruddery/Rights of way Review. It was understood that the HCC consultation would commence shortly and an update from the rights of way officer had been requested.

**55.4.5** Conservation Area review by NHDC. *See 56 below.*

## **56. WORKING GROUP REPORTS**

**56.1** Conservation Area Review Group (leader Parishioner David Short). Graham Lee reported that a further meeting of the group was scheduled. A small number of additions to the current conservation area, and the justification for these to be proposed, was being discussed. The deadline for these to go to the NHDC consultant was the end of November.

**56.2** Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). Norton Mahy reported that the minor adjustments required were being made. The plan was scheduled to go to the NHDC Cabinet meeting in December.

**56.3** Local business support (leader Cllr Graham Lee). Graham Lee reported that he had been invited to participate in the NHDC Cabinet Panel 'The Future of our Centres' on 8<sup>th</sup> November. He had been asked to report on the impact of Covid on the community and local businesses, and what changes there might be in the future.

**56.4** Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). David Sims reported on progress with the plans for additional planting at Small Gains and the Recreation Ground.

**56.5** Yearbook Group (leader Cllr Norton Mahy). Norton Mahy reported that all was on plan for the 2022 edition. The current printer had put their prices up and next year alternative quotes would be obtained.

*End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated from here.*

## **57. MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS.**

*See appendices below for summary of actions completed, actions ongoing and premises matters.*

**57.1** The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had a site meeting scheduled for next week re planned works.

**57.2** Recreation Ground and pavilion. The Chairman relayed a report from Cllr Gemma Allan. The project for new equipment to enhance the facilities for older children was pending her application to the Henry Colbron Trust. Further consultation with stakeholders would follow the response to this. The new pavilion project had been set back by Covid and was now on hold. The refurbishment of the public toilets would now be progressed separately. Cllr Martin Hoffman stressed the importance of addressing the current plumbing/winter freezing issues.

## **58. PLANNING MATTERS**

*See appendix below with a summary of recent NHDC consultations and their status.*

### **58.1 New consultations received from NHDC.**

#### **58.1.1 Land Opposite 67, Station Road.** NHDC ref. 21/02803/FP

Full Planning Permission: Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling.

It was noted that Herts Highways had raised no objections but had recommended that sight lines for the access off Ashwell Street/the Ruddery needed improvement. There were seven public comments posted on the NHDC website, balanced between those in support of the application and those with objections. The latter were based on privacy issues and the adverse impact of development on the Ruddery.

Parish councillors noted that that this was for a four-bedroom house and, although only a single dwelling, this was not in line with the Neighbourhood Plan policy for smaller units.

Also raised was the impact on the Ruddery, an historic trackway that contributed significantly to the Conservation Area and provided a good route for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders etc. It was agreed that this one dwelling, only a short distance along the track from Station Road, would have limited impact. However, any additional development further along the Ruddery would be very detrimental and would be strongly opposed.

It was **resolved** to respond to the NHDC consultation with a recommendation that permission be granted but noting the concerns about the Ruddery and requesting that Permitted Development Rights be withdrawn. **Action: Clerk**

### **58.2 Trees in the Conservation Area (TCA)/Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).**

#### **58.2.1 No.5 The Rickyard.** NHDC ref. 21/02900/TCA

Hazel, Whitebeam - 20% Reduction. Holly, Rowan - Remove

Following discussion it was agreed that there were no objections to the reductions or the removal of the Rowan. It was agreed to request that the applicant consider pruning of the Holly rather than its complete removal unless there were any specific safety or other grounds. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

**58.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing:**

**58.3.1** Land at the junction of Station Road and Ashwell Street to be called **Townsend Meadow**. NHDC ref. nos. 19/00455/FP and 20/02599/S73.

(i) New section of footway. District Cllr Tom Tyson reported that he had requested input from the Enforcement Officer as to why several of the properties were occupied prior to the footway installation; this was in breach of the planning condition. Parish councillors requested that this be strongly pursued. They regretted that this was yet another example of poor compliance with the rules by developers and the loss of firm control by the planning authority.

**58.3.2** Land rear of Claybush Road development to be called **Claybush Hill Meadow**. NHDC ref. no. 16/0797/1. It was noted that site works were still ongoing; some houses were now occupied.

**59. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.**

**59.1** Monthly summary of accounts. These were approved for signature.

**Action: Graham/Martin/Clerk**

**59.2** Audit for 2020-21. The following were noted, (i) the final report had been received from the External Auditor, (ii) the publicity requirements for public notices had been correctly enacted (01/07/21 to 11/08/21 and at conclusion 14/10/21).

**59.3** Budget for 2022-23. It was noted that this had been discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October and a first draft was in preparation. The final version was due to be presented to the December Council meeting for approval.

*Meeting closed at 21.45*

**Forthcoming meeting dates:**

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Appendix A: Parish Council actions ongoing.

(i) Liaison with residents of Lucas Lane and our County Cllr Steve Jarvis re concerns following works by an electricity supplier.

(ii) Liaison with the police re a parking issue in Station Road.

(iii) Speeding/Twenty's Plenty campaign. Liaison with the school and our PCSO. Wheelie bin stickers (can also be used as a poster) available from the Parish Council office at Bear Farm.

(iv) Reporting to HCC/Herts Highways and liaison with our County Cllr Steve Jarvis following residents' concerns of vegetation overhanging roads and paths at several locations.

(v) Village hall. Communications with the solicitor and the Village Hall Management trustees is ongoing to change their status to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation. The transfer of the property title to the Parish Council, who will become the holding/custodian trustee, is to follow this.

Appendix B: Reports/updates on Parish Council Premises Management.

(i) Grounds' maintenance. The grass cutting has now ceased for this season and the autumn hedge cutting completed. The annual professional tree reports have been received and works recommended for action will be scheduled according to need.

(ii) Small Gains sports and allotment area (Cllr David Sims). Suppliers have been approached re the second phase of the new tree planting and hedge works.

(iii) Street furniture. Problems with the emptying of the litter bins has been chased up – NHDC's contractor should do this every 4 weeks. The lighting problem in the old telephone box housing the defibrillator has been resolved (and at no cost thanks to our village lady electrician).

(iv) Recreation Ground. Plans for new equipment aimed particularly at older children are ongoing with some funding already ensured. A request for funds from the Henry Colbron Trust has been submitted.

Appendix C: Reports/updates from other organisations.

i) Regular local policing update 'Rural News' from our PCSO Chris Braybrook (see under News and Events on [www.ashwell.gov.uk](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk)).

Appendix D: Summary of recent NHDC Planning Application consultations and their status as of 8th November 2021.

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
Land Opposite 67 Station Road	21/02803/FP	Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling	PC to NHDC: No Objection but to note concerns re: Ruddy and to withdraw permitted development.	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	Pending
Ashwell Primary School, Silver Street	21/02560/FP	Creation of designated drop-off zone for vulnerable & special needs children	PC to NHDC: No objection	PERMISSION GRANTED
24-26 High Street	21/02178/FPH	Erection of detached double garage/garden room following demolition of existing detached garage/outbuilding	PC to NHDC: No objection in principle but request for condition to protect off-street parking and future use.	GRANTED: Condition 3. The outbuilding hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwellinghouse known as 24-26 High Street, Ashwell.
Slip End Service Station, Royston Road, Slip End	21/01582/FP	Change of use to sale of motor vehicles (sui generis - E)	PC to NHDC: No objection	PERMISSION REFUSED
Ashwell End Farm, Loves Lane	21/02042/FPH	Single Storey side & rear extensions following demolition of existing detached rear outbuilding	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Land east of 35 Ashwell Street	21/01825/FP	Erection of one 4 bed dwelling (revision of previously approved planning application, 20/01712/FP granted on 28/9/2020)	PC to NHDC: Objection	Pending

## Appendix D: Summary of monthly accounts for October

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st October 2021					
RECEIPTS					£
64	Neville Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (Oct)			68.75
65	Neville Funeral Services	CW 21.20 - Interment of Ashes			280.00
66	Santander	Reserve Account interest			0.17
				<b>Total</b>	<b>348.92</b>
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
137	Ashwell Youth & Community Centre	Use of village Hall for PC meeting	17.30		17.30
138	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Oct)	25.00	5.00	30.00
139	MCL Communications/Powerscribe	Website domain renewal	75.00	15.00	90.00
140	The Blue Tree Company UK Ltd	Tree works on the recreation ground Inv No 2991	867.50	173.50	1,041.00
141	The Play Inspection Company Ltd	Annual Inspection Rec & Springs	139.00	27.80	166.80
142	Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services	Toilet Cleaning & Consumables Sept Inv 2311	190.00		190.00
143	Clerk	Reimbursements (inc Zoom meeting set up items)	61.08	9.83	70.91
144	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance WS 21, inv 22016	395.00	79.00	474.00
145	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	508.99		508.99
146	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	740.66		740.66
147	North Herts District Council	recreation ground trade waste bin	106.34		106.34
148	North Herts District Council	Streets Support trade waste bin	119.73		119.73
149	North Herts District Council	Springs trade waste bin	119.73		119.73
150	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance WS 22, inv 22065	1037.00	207.40	1,244.40
151	The Blue Tree Company UK Ltd	Annual Surveys, Springs, St Mary's, Rec&Cemetery	1035.00	207.00	1,242.00
152	Fairhaven Stone Ltd	War Memorial Cleaning	1500.00	300.00	1,800.00
153	EON Next Energy Ltd	Electricity for Public Toilets in September	13.84	0.69	14.53
154	Clerk	Salary	1395.70		1,395.70
155	Deputy Clerk	Salary	850.71		850.71
156	ECO	Salary	249.10		249.10
157	Grounds Officer	Salary	171.00		171.00
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,617.68</b>	<b>1,025.22</b>
					<b>10,642.90</b>
	<b>MONEY AT BANK</b>	Current Account 31/10/2021	<b>£48,518.22</b>		
		Reserve Account 31/10/2021	<b>£20,703.57</b>		