

Minutes of the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1st September 2021

Present: Parish Cllrs Gemma Allan, Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman), David Sims and Mark White.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter). District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Five members of the public joined on Zoom -some for parts of the meeting and some for all.

36. Apologies for absence. Martin Hoffman (planned treatment to fractured ribs).

37. Declarations of Interest. None.

38. Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 4th August 2021.

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

Action: Graham/Clerk

39. OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC

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

The Chairman noted the sad death of parishioner Martin Lush who had for many years made a very positive contribution to the Parish Council and the wider community. His work on the Rights of way and at the Springs where he organised and led the volunteer working groups had been much appreciated. Cllr Dr Martin Hoffman had been particularly appreciative of the latter.

39.1 Items from members of the public.

39.1.1 Application for a telecoms mast on the grass verge at the rear of the school in Ashwell - update. *See also item 42.1.4 below.*

The Chairman reported that there had been further dialogue with the applicant's agent (DotSurvey who were acting on behalf of the telecoms company Three). The planning objections to the current application and suggestions for alternative sites had been communicated along with a technical report. This afternoon he had gained agreement from the agent, DotSurvey, that they would inform Three of these issues. The formal response to the NHDC consultation objecting to the application would be approved later in the meeting and despatched to them tomorrow.

District Cllr Tom Tyson thanked all for their work on this. He reported that he had good reason to be optimistic that the application to NHDC would not be approved. County Cllr Steve Jarvis reported that he had communicated with Herts Highway both with regard to this application and in general how telecoms applications

were handled by them. It was noted that Herts Highways had now made a specific response to this application with objections, and a recommendation that it be refused, in relation to the rear entrance of the school and the footway. It was noted that the Parish Council's objections had included the adverse impact on traffic sight lines at the school entrance and access to school buses by children.

39.1.1 Development of nine houses at Townsend Meadow off Station Road.

A parishioner reported her concern at the increasingly poor state of the large Ash tree on the corner of the new access driveway and asked if a request could be made to remove the ivy that was killing the tree. It was noted that the Parish Council had earlier raised concerns both with the developer and NHDC re several issues with this site including the tree. Photos had been taken of where the tree roots had been cut into by the developer. An enforcement officer from NHDC had made a site visit. The Chairman noted the advice from the Woodland Trust that ivy did not kill trees and had many benefits for wildlife but noted that others did not agree with this. District Cllr Tom Tyson agreed to take the concerns up with the NHDC Planning Officer.

See also 42.3.1 below.

39.1.2 Speeding and the 20mph limit.

A parishioner reported her concern about speeding traffic and the poor adherence to the 20mph limit. County Cllr Steve Jarvis responded that he was aware of these issues. Whilst average speeds were fairly low some drivers went too fast and dealing with these was difficult. Physical methods were possible in some places, eg the planned chicane at West End, but residents had divided views on speed bumps and tables. The police would attend at locations where they were likely to catch multiple offenders that would result in prosecutions.

It was agreed that the 'Twenty's Plenty' publicity campaign (stickers for bins, involvement of the school etc) that had been halted by Covid would be relaunched. Police speed checks would also be requested.

Action: Clerk/ Gemma/David

39.2 North Herts District Council (NHDC).

District Councillor Tom Tyson reported.

(i) Herts Lynx DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) bus service. This new service would be launched on 19th September and would cover the North Herts rural area and towns and down to Stevenage and Bishop's Stortford in the south. Costs were linked to mileage and pickups would be from allocated bus stops. County Cllr Steve Jarvis reported that he had made enquiries about coverage of the Northfields Road area of the village and the station.

Full information was available on

www.intalink.org.uk/hertslynx.

It was agreed that the posters provided be displayed on village notice boards and the parish website.

(ii) Solar Farm proposals at Bygrave. This was at the pre-application stage and the developer had sent details to neighbouring Parish Councils including Ashwell. The area proposed for the installation was from the edge of Upper Bygrave down to Cat Ditch. The Chairman noted that once the planning application had been made NHDC would issue a public consultation; on the positive side a solar farm would

contribute to low carbon energy creation but on the negative side this would result in the loss of high-grade agricultural land.

(iii) Development of two bungalows between Dixies Close and Back Street. The agreed landscaping plans had required four new trees to be planted but to date there were only two. The developer had been requested to plant the two missing trees.

(iv) Claybush Hill development. The required works to the roadway that was to provide part of the new pedestrian access from Ashwell Street had not been carried out according to the agreed plans. He had taken this up with the NHDC Planning Officer and the developer.

(v) Two walls damaged by the NHDC contractor's waste/recycling vehicles. The repairs to both of these (Swan Street and Ashwell Street) were now in hand.

(vi) New play equipment at the Rec. NHDC Community Development had been involved with this. *See item 41 below.*

(vii) Restricted parking spaces. The NHDC Enforcement Officer had attended and tickets issued where vehicles had overstayed the time limit.

(viii) Warm Up festival. Responses received to date had not reported any major issues. He requested that any further comments be forwarded to him; he would collate these and communicate them to relevant parties. A concern about parking adjacent to the site and the blocking of driveways was noted. The Chairman noted that the better management in recent years had been appreciated.

See also item 42 re Planning.

39.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

County Councillor Steve Jarvis reported.

(i) Station Road pedestrian safety improvements. The public consultation had finished and responses had been positive. The proposed speed humps/tables would come later as part of a second phase.

(ii) West End chicane. A new design that met the Highways safety audit requirements had now been drafted and local residents would be consulted on this. He was hopeful that construction would take place in late 2021 or early 2022.

(iii) Additional waiting restrictions/yellow lines. The Traffic Regulation Order had been issued for several locations including the corner of High Street and Gardiners Lane, Silver Street and the rear of the school.

(iv) New Cycle/walking routes to Ashwell Station. This county-wide initiative did not include many rural routes but it was hoped that this would be an exception. The Chairman thanked parishioner Guy Reed for his input on this.

See 39.2 above re the new demand response bus service.

39.4 Items from parish councillors (see below for premises reports)

39.4.1 Greening Ashwell group. The Chairman reported that, following on from the request that the Parish Council get involved and the Extraordinary meeting, efforts continued to identify someone who might be recommended to the group to contribute to the leadership of the group. It was understood that the current leader planned to relaunch the group at an event on Saturday 25th September.

39.4.2 Dixies Meadow/advertisement by Savills Cambridge/'For Sale - Development opportunity'. The Chairman reported that, as previously agreed, research into options and discussions with potentially interested parties was ongoing and these would be put to the community before any decisions made.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated from here.

40. Working Groups reports.

40.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). The Chairman reported that NHDC, following consultation with the Parish Council, had progressed the appointment of an Examiner. The evaluation of the plan would now proceed according to a set timetable.

40.2 Yearbook Group (leader Cllr Norton Mahy). Cllr Norton Mahy reported that he had communicated with individual members and the whole group was scheduled to meet and begin work on the next edition on 11th October.

41. Monthly reports on premises/other responsibilities from parish councillors.

See appendices below for summary of actions completed, actions ongoing and premises matters. Also reports received from other organisations.

41.2 New equipment at the Rec. Cllr Gemma Allan reported that she had met with representatives of user groups (Football, Cricket and the Accies) to determine where this might/might not be located. Items proposed included parkour type modules for older children and adult gym-style equipment for adults. She was grateful for input and funding from NHDC and HCC. Plans for a new build pavilion had been rethought following Covid as options for further fundraising were now much more difficult. This meant that some section 106 funds held at NHDC could be accessed for this project. A bid would also be made to the Henry Colbron Trust. A refurbishment of the public toilets would go forward using Section 106 funds.

41. 3 The Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman had reported the following, (i) no response had been received from the landowner re the proposed boundary works, (ii) the annual tree survey had been completed and a quote for planned works this autumn/winter awaited, (ii) provision of litter bins was under review.

42. Planning matters.

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

42.1 New consultations received from NHDC.

42.1.1 No.24 - 26 High Street. NHDC Ref 21/02178/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Erection of detached double garage/garden room following demolition of existing detached garage/outbuilding.

The concerns of the neighbours were noted.

The Chairman noted that for other developments in Hodwell, despite objections, they had ultimately resulted in the loss of parking spaces and exacerbated problems in the High Street. There was also the issue of whether, at some point in the future, the building might be converted to living accommodation or even sold as a separate dwelling.

It was proposed to respond to the NHDC consultation that there were no objections in principle to the current proposals but that conditions should be imposed that restricted any future use as living accommodation and/or the selling as a separate dwelling.

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

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.1.2 No.62 Back Street. NHDC Ref 21/02309/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Single storey rear extension and external flue.

It was noted that, to date, there were no comments or objections on the NHDC website nor had any been received by the Parish Council.

It was **resolved** that a response be made to the NHDC consultation that there were no objections.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.1.3 Slip End Service Station, Royston Road, Slip End. NHDC Ref 21/01592/FP

Full Planning Permission: Change of use to sale of motor vehicles (Sui Generis).

It was noted that, to date, there were no comments or objections on the NHDC website nor had any been received by the Parish Council.

It was **resolved** that a response be made to the NHDC consultation that there were no objections.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.1.4 Land Opposite 41, Ashwell Street. NHDC Ref no. 21/02184/TD

Telecommunications Determination: Proposed 5G telecoms installation including 18m high street pole c/w wrap-around cabinet and 3 further additional equipment cabinets. *See also 39.1.1 above.*

The very high number of public objections posted on the NHDC website was noted. A draft response from the Parish Council to the NHDC consultation had been circulated. This requested that the application be rejected based on the following objections, (i) the adverse impact on the Ashwell Conservation Area, (ii) the adverse impact on views to the Grade 1 listed St Mary's Church, (iii) the adverse ecological impact on a site identified as important for local chalk grassland flora, (iv) the adverse impact on the school entrance, (v) no evidence had been supplied that the use of existing masts had been explored.

It was **resolved** that the response be sent to the NHDC Planning Officer.

Action: Clerk

42.2 Trees in the Conservation Area (TCA)/Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

42.2.1 Second application for Westbury House, West End. NHDC ref.

21/02388/TCA. Corsican Pine -Fell. It was noted that this application was being progressed to clarify that the previous application (NHDC ref. 21/01915/TCA) had included an incorrect address. The previous application had been given a 'No objection' response from NHDC on 2nd August 2021.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.2.2 The Three Tuns, High Street. 21/01915/TCA. Sycamore -Fell to ground.

It was reported that the NHDC Planning Officer had given an 'Objection' response to this submission and was considering the Parish Council's request for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to be placed on the tree. Further information had since been forthcoming from the applicant that the residents of the neighbouring property had raised concerns about the tree causing damage to

their property. It was understood that if NHDC were minded to place a TPO on the tree there would be liability implications for them.

42.2.3 No.77 High Street NHDC ref. 21/02526/TCA

Trees (Conservation Area): T2 Apple - Reduce to clear boundary. Viable growth points to be maintained. T4 Beech - Reduce in height by up to 3m and bring the sides in by up to 1m to viable growth points.

It was noted that this application and the one following were for neighbouring properties.

It was **resolved** that a response be made to the NHDC consultation that there were no objections.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.2.4 The Old Byre, High Street. NHDC ref.21/02523/TCA

Trees (Conservation Area): T1 Ash - Fell to ground level. T3 Apple - Crown reduce by up to 1.5 m to shape. T5 Olive - Reduce overlong branches by up to 1.5 m and shape into inner crown. T6 - Common Horse chestnut - Fell to ground level. T7 Cherry - Fell to ground level.

Concerns were expressed at the potential loss of three trees. It was noted that the view of the Parish Council was generally in favour of reduction works to manage trees rather than removal. Frustration was expressed at the lack of any reason for the proposed works. It was noted that the garden area of the property was not large and did accommodate other trees. Also that the Ash tree was very close to the boundary wall with the High Street

It was **resolved** that a response be made to the NHDC Planning Officer requesting whether they could determine the applicant's reasons for the proposed removals.

Action: Deputy Clerk

42.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing.

42.3.1 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) 21/00427/DOC (Condition 20: Proposed trees, bat and bird boxes).

It was noted that this condition had now been signed off by NHDC. The site would be monitored to see that the works were carried out.

(ii) Condition to install a new footway whilst retaining the hedge.

Cllr David Sims had reported that the hedge had now been cut back. There was no further information re the new footway.

See also 39.1.1 above re the Ash Tree.

42.3.2 Land rear of Claybush Road development to be called **Claybush Hill Meadow**. NHDC ref. no. 16/0797/1.

(i) Planning Condition 24: Provision of safe pedestrian access.

See item 39.2 (iv) above.

43. Finance and governance matters.

43.1 Monthly summary of accounts. Proposal for approval.

It was **resolved** that these be approved and signed. **Action: Graham/Martin/Clerk**

43.2 Insurance renewal (from 1st October 2021).

It was **resolved** that a response be sent to the broker that the current insurance be renewed with no changes. It was noted that the sums covered were index-linked.

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed at 22.20

APPENDICES – FOR INFORMATION

Appendix A: Parish Council actions ongoing.

(i) 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) Small Gains Allotments (Cllr David Sims). All plots are currently let and there is no-one on the waiting list. Further new tree planting is planned for the autumn/winter season.

(ii) Small Gains sports area (Cllr David Sims). The Accies have initiated a project to improve their facilities; the Parish Council is supportive of this and has provided background documents to assist them.

(iii) Tree works have been completed at the Springs and the Cemetery. The snagging issues at the Recreation Ground have now been completed. The annual professional tree surveys for all trees that come within the Parish Council's responsibility have been completed. No urgent issues have been identified and quotes are pending for works recommended.

(iv) Street furniture. Minor repairs to some of the parish-owned litter bins have been carried out and alternative designs for new installations researched. The Parish Council's notice board is scheduled for refurbishment. The old telephone box where the defibrillator is housed has been given a clean-up.

(v) Grounds' maintenance. Extra strimming is continuing in St Mary's Churchyard to support the 'Living Churchyards' project in the area next to Hodwell. The Springs boundary hedge alongside Springhead has been given a light trim to keep it clear from the road. A more significant cut of all parish-owned hedges is scheduled for the autumn/winter.

(vi) Recreation Ground. Plans for new play equipment aimed particularly at older children are ongoing with some funding already ensured. New doors have been fitted to the public toilets. The major plans for a new pavilion have been suspended due to insufficient funding; Covid has meant that our options to secure the additional funds needed are no longer realistic. Refurbishment of the public toilets will be progressed.

Appendix C: Reports/updates from other organisations.

(i) Greening Ashwell. See 39.4.1 above.

(ii) Regular local policing update 'Rural News' from our PCSO Chris Braybrook (see under News and Events on www.ashwell.gov.uk).

(iii) Enforcement of parking restrictions. NHDC officers have attended and tickets have been issued.

Appendix D: Summary of recent NHDC Planning Application consultations and their status as of 1st September 2021.

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
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.	Pending
62 Back Street	21/02309/FPH	Single Storey rear extension and external flue	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
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	Pending
Land opposite 41 Ashwell Street, (behind school)	21/02184/TD	Proposed 5G telecoms installation including 18m high street pole c/w wrap-around cabinet and 3 further additional equipment cabinets.	PC to NHDC: Objection	REFUSED
20 West End (Village hall)	21/02203/FP	Replace existing artificial grass surface with porous play surface.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
Ducklake House, 27a Springhead	21/02095/FPH & LBC	Extension of boundary brick wall and erection of timber fence and gate following removal of existing fence and gate.	PC to NHDC: No objection	Pending
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
40 High Street	21/01835/FPH	Repairs to chimney stack and gable end (see also Listed Building Consent 21/01836/LBC)	PC to NHDC: No objection	Permission Granted
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 E: Accounts summary for 01 -31 August 2021

	RECEIPTS				£
52	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (Aug)			68.75
53	James Pepper Monumental Masons	Headstone fee for CW 21.11			140.00
54	Parishioner	Re-seeding plot CW 21.11			95.00
55	Santander	Account interest			0.18
				Total	303.93
	PAYMENTS		£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
94	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Aug)	25.00	5.00	30.00
95	Dan Home	Painting Toilet Doors	65.00		65.00
96	Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services	Toilet Cleaning & Consumables July	235.00		235.00
97	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	740.66		740.66
98	Brilliant Lawns	Grass Cutting on Rec, Inv no 9170	120.00		120.00
99	D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet number 15, inv no 21780	461.00	92.20	553.20
100	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	509.39		509.39
101	The Community Heartbeat Trust	Replacement Defib Pads	46.00	9.20	55.20
102	Abacus Cleaning & Stationery	Stationary for office, Inv Number 49891	162.44	32.49	194.93
103	BT Landline & Internet	Landline & broadband for Office Inv on 4.8.2021	128.85	25.77	154.62
104	EON	Electricity for Public Toilets, Inv no	12.58	0.63	13.21
105	Clerk	Salary	1,395.70		1,395.70
106	Grounds Officer	Salary	173.60		173.60
107	Deputy Clerk	Salary	850.71		850.71
108	ECO	Salary	249.10		249.10
		TOTAL	5,175.03	165.29	5,340.32
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 31/08/2021	27,628.19		
		Reserve Account 31/08/2021	20,703.22		

Signed

Date