

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council October meeting
held on Wednesday 4th January 2021, 8pm online via Zoom**

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

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Deputy Clerk (Laura Brooks-Payne), District Councillor Tom Tyson, County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Three parishioners also joined the meeting.

Members of the public who were signed up to the website (www.ashwell.gov.uk) were invited to join the meeting using Zoom. A link with log in details was emailed to them and any others who requested.

31. Apologies for absence. None.

32. Declarations of Interest. None.

33. Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the previous monthly meeting, 2nd December 2020.

Approved for signature.

Action: Graham/Clerk

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

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

34.1 Items raised by members of the public.

34.1.1 Jill Powell on behalf of the Ashwell Royal British Legion explained their plans to refurbish their notice board on the wall in the High Street. She requested whether the householder, and owner of the wall, could be asked to cut back the overhanging vegetation that dropped debris onto the board beneath. Cllr Gemma Allan agreed to contact the householder who was commended for their permission to accommodate the notice boards of the RBL and others. **Action: Gemma**

34.1.2 David Roberts requested information on services provided by Ashwell Surgery and in particular the Covid vaccination roll-out. Cllr Graham Lee responded that one of the matters highlighted by local residents in the recent Neighbourhood Plan consultation was their concerns re the surgery. Following this he had established a line of communication with the Ashwell Patients Group (APG) and had sat in on their meetings with representatives from the surgery. It had been agreed that the Parish Council would assist the surgery in communicating to local residents. To that end the Parish Council had today put information on the Covid vaccination plans for Ashwell, provided by the APG, on the website (www.ashwell.gov.uk) and sent this out to those residents signed up to receive emails. In brief, patients would be contacted according to the central government priority list from the week commencing 11th January. Residents were asked not to contact the surgery as this put an additional burden on staff but to wait until they were contacted. Cllr Martin Hoffman provided further information.

34.1.3 Janice Willis raised concerns re poor observance of the parking restrictions outside the shop. Graham Lee reported that he had previously spoken to some of those concerned and would do so again. It was agreed to look again at the use of the Parish Council's 'yellow card' system. **Action: Graham/Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

34.1.4 Information board at the Springs. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he would investigate the reported damage.

34.2 North Herts District Council (NHDC). Reports/updates from our District Councillor Tom Tyson.

(i) Swan Street wall damaged by the Urbaser waste/recycling vehicle. He understood from Urbaser that their insurers were awaiting a quote so some progress was obviously being made on the matter.

See 35.3 below re development in Station Road.

34.3 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). Reports/updates from our County Councillor Steve Jarvis.

(i) Covid testing capacity. Information had been included in the regular health briefings that he received. It was unlikely that North Herts would be included in any testing programme to determine symptomless cases. The vaccination programme was proceeding across the county and hopefully rates would soon pick up.

(ii) LED street lighting. Installation had commenced. Whilst the majority of units would be converted this week the great variety of specifications in Ashwell presented challenges; different parts would be required for some and this might cause delays. At some point the new units would be connected to a central management system. He warned that until this happened there might be issues with part-night lighting and the dimming/intensity of lights.

(iii) New yellow lines and zig-zags outside the school. Traffic regulation orders had been issued for these to proceed. This did not include the yellow lines in Silver Street that had to involve a public consultation.

(iv) A505 safety. Minor works were underway to address the issue of drivers turning right incorrectly into oncoming traffic; this occurred ‘distressingly frequently’.

(v) Request from the URC re parking issues outside the Church in the High Street. Lack of available on-street parking had become increasingly problematic particularly for a wheelchair user. It was agreed that yellow lines would not resolve the problem. A suggestion was made that they try putting notices out when needed and see what effect this had.

Action: Clerk

34.4 District Local Plan. In response to a question from Cllr Graham Lee, District Councillor Tom Tyson and County Councillor Steve Jarvis responded. Following updated forecasts from the Office of National Statistics, the housing numbers required for North Herts in the Local Plan had been the subject of a challenge and debated at a full meeting of NHDC. The Council had voted in favour of no changes being made to adjust, ie to reduce, the housing numbers in the Local Plan. It had been noted that some members had feared revisions at this stage would increase the risk of the plan being rejected by the Inspector. The Examination was scheduled to re-open in February but this had not been confirmed.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated from here.

34.5 Working Groups reports.

34.5.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group (leader Cllr Graham Lee, deputy Cllr Norton Mahy). Cllr Norton Mahy reported. The final draft before submission to NHDC was now being put to the Parish Council for approval. This had also been sent to members of the working group. Since the previous draft was circulated the comments from the public consultation and statutory consultees had been incorporated. There had been no fundamental changes. Some terminology required by the statutory consultees had now been incorporated and policies could not conflict with either the Local Plan or national planning policy (NPPF). Comments from local residents had resulted in some amendments to the parts covering green infrastructure and education. Cllr Martin Hoffman commended the hard work involved and proposed that the draft be approved. It was noted that should the final review by the working group members raise any issues then these would be brought to the attention of parish councillors.

It was **resolved** that the draft Neighbourhood Plan be approved for submission to NHDC.

Cllr Graham Lee thanked all those involved for the work that had been undertaken over the last 6 to 7 years and wanted to acknowledge not only the current members of the working group but also others involved,

34.5.2 Local business support (leader Cllr Graham Lee).

Cllr Graham Lee proposed that contact be made with the new tenants at the Three Tuns and the Bushel & Strike to welcome them to the village. Support should be offered and a conduit for communications established. This was agreed and Cllr Gemma Allen offered to progress this.

Action: Gemma

34.5.3 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims).

Cllr David Sims reported that in addition to the three Silver Birch trees at Small Gains other planting was planned.

34.5.4 Yearbook Group (leader Norton Mahy).

Cllr Norton Mahy reported that all was on schedule for publication as usual in March. The Deputy Clerk (Laura) reported that the number of adverts she had obtained would be similar to last year. She was commended for this in what had been a particularly difficult time.

34.6 Monthly reports from parish councillors.

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

Also reports received from other organisations.

34.6.1 Village communications. Cllr Graham Lee expressed his desire that the Parish Council should communicate as widely and effectively as possible to residents. Not all were internet users or read notice boards. The recent problems caused by the new Village News editorial policy to exclude certain subjects such as Covid were noted. He suggested that newsletters could be published by the Parish Council focussed on key issues and delivered to all households.

Cllr Gemma Allen agreed to put forward some ideas for social media using facebook.

Cllr Norton Mahy agreed to put in some work on the website once the Neighbourhood Plan took up less of his time.

Cllr Martin Hoffman again expressed his concerns over the new Village News policies that restricted what he wished to write in his monthly Jottings. He requested that the Chairman again approach the St Mary's PCC as the publisher to protest. It was noted that his Jottings were widely commended and he was encouraged to continue to write them. **Action: Graham**

34.6.2 Concerns re clearance of wildlife friendly vegetation by householders. It was agreed that this issue needed to be communicated widely to residents and would be discussed further.

34.6.3 Luton airport/NATS consultation on changes to arrivals routes, deadline 5th February 2021.
https://consultations.airspacechange.co.uk/london-luton-airport/ad6_luton_arrivals/

Cllr Graham Lee reported that he had taken advice from others. He proposed that a response to the consultation be prepared based on their input and that this be cascaded to residents encouraging them to respond as individuals.

34.6.4 Public toilets at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Gemma Allen reported that these had been closed due to the freezing weather. This was a necessity to avoid freezing of the pipework as had happened in the past with significant and costly damage caused.

34.6.5 School. Cllr Gemma Allen reported that children from categories classed as vulnerable and from critical workers were having face-to-face lessons whilst others were being taught online. More children were in school than in the first lockdown. This and the teaching of two separate groups was a considerable challenge for staff.

35. Planning matters.

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

35.1 New consultations for response to NHDC.

None received.

35.2 Trees in the Conservation Area/Tree Preservation Orders -submissions to NHDC.

35.2.1 50 Back Street. Pruning to an Elder tree. No objections were raised.

Action: Deputy Clerk

35.2.2 49 Silver Street. Fell one Apple tree. It was agreed that the photos referred to in the application would be requested.

Action: Deputy Clerk

35.3 Updates on previous planning applications/developments ongoing.

35.3.1 Land at the junction of Station Road and Ashwell Street (permission granted for x9 houses).

(i) The NHDC Street Naming Officer had proposed 'Townsend Meadow' and the developer had accepted this.

(ii) NHDC consultation on the developer's application (Section73 amendment) to increase the size of all the houses to 4 and 5 bedrooms (current permission for 3 and 4 bedrooms).

Cllr Tom Tyson had informed that he had spoken to the NHDC Planning Officer following the Parish Council's objections. No decision had yet been made and this would likely be made by the NHDC Planning Committee. It was agreed that the Parish Council's objections would be reiterated to the NHDC Planning Committee meeting.

(iii) NHDC planning permission granted with a condition that the developer provides a new section of footway to join with the existing.

Cllr Tom Tyson had provided further information including a site plan showing the position of the new footway and the retention of the hedge. It was agreed that the situation continue to be closely monitored and the residents of no.54 Station Road be kept informed.

35.3.2 Land rear of Claybush Road development.

(i) The NHDC Street Naming Officer had informed that the name 'Claybush Hill Meadow' had been agreed. He was disappointed that the houses were being marketed under the name 'Harvest Place' as this was confusing.

(ii) Concerns re the tree barrier, required as a condition of the planning permission, to mitigate the impact of views from Arbury Banks. It was agreed that the situation continue to be monitored to ensure that the planning condition imposed was met.

36. Finance and governance matters.

36.1 Monthly summary of accounts.

It was *resolved* that these be approved.

Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk

Meeting closed 21.55

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Next monthly Council meeting - Wednesday 3rd February 2021, 8pm on Zoom.

APPENDICES – FOR INFORMATION

Appendix A: Parish Council actions completed since last meeting.

(i) Residents’ requests for additional street name signs to address delivery issues. Additional signs for the Dovecote (off Back Street) and Ashwell Street (east from Station Road) were taken up with the relevant NHDC officer and will be installed.

Appendix B: Parish Council actions ongoing.

- (i) Village hall/transfer to the Parish Council of the holding/custodian trusteeship. A form was completed by the Management Committee and passed to the solicitor to inform the drafting of their new trust deed. No further communications received.
- (ii) Improved cycleway and carparking at the station/proposals by Cambridgeshire landowner as part of development plans in Odsey. No further communications with the landowner.
- (iii) ‘Twenty’s Plenty’ wheelie bin stickers/posters available free from the Parish Council office. Our local police are to give speed awareness training to pupils at the school
- (iv) Drainage issues. Gully clearance by Herts Highways is ongoing; some drains will have to be manually dug out. Our county councillor Steve Jarvis is monitoring this.
- (v) Overhanging vegetation in the High Street to Silver Street twitchel. Information on ownership of boundaries is pending.
- (vi) Office of National Statistics/request for local assistance with the 2021 census.

Appendix C: Reports/updates from other organisations.

- (i) Greening Ashwell. Regular reports on their meetings and activities.
- (ii) Regular local policing update ‘Rural News’ from our PCSO Chris Braybrook.

Appendix D: Reports/updates on Parish Council premises management.

- (i) Small Gains (Cllr David Sims). New tree planting funded by the developer’s mitigation for the loss of the Chestnut tree in Lucas Lane has been completed. Some additional tree planting and hedge works are planned.
- (ii) Recreation Ground (Cllr Gemma Allan) Minor works to the playground equipment and the pavilion roof have been completed. The automatic closures on the toilets are now operational and they are closed overnight; signs have been put up to inform users. Works to trees along the boundary with Lucas Lane properties are pending quotes from the supplier.
- (iii) Cemetery. The tarmac paths have been pressure-washed to remove moss. The avenue of pollarded Lime trees will be pruned in late February/early March.
- (iv) Street furniture. The Parish Council’s notice board and the open access ‘community’ board by the old telephone box in the High Street will be given an interim clean with varnishing planned for later in the year. The old telephone box that houses the defibrillator will also be cleaned. The litter bin in the High Street by the bus stop was damaged by a vehicle mounting the kerb and is to be repaired.

Appendix E: Summary of recent NHDC Planning Application consultations and their status -as of 6th January 2020.

Details of applications are sent from North Herts District Council (NHDC) to the Parish Council as a consultee. Full details of applications are available on the NHDC website.

| Address | Application Number | Brief description | Ashwell PC Comments | North Herts Decision |
|---|--------------------|--|--|---|
| 95 High Street | 20/02752/FPH | Replacement of existing cladding, fascias / soffits, windows / doors | PC to NHDC: No Objection | Pending |
| Zoar Baptist Chapel | 20/02619/FPH | Replacement single storey rear extension | PC to NHDC: No Objection | Pending |
| Land at Jct of Ashwell Street & Station Road | 20/02599/S73 | Erection of 9 dwellings, application already granted (19/00455/FP) this is an application for a change in design to utilise roof space for additional bedrooms and insert rooflights | PC to NHDC: Objection | Pending |
| Land east of 35 Ashwell street (NB this is an additional proposed dwelling to the one recently granted permission for on the same site 20/01721/FP) | 20/02309/FP | 1 x 3 bed dwelling inc basement & light-well | PC to NHDC: recommendation for Permission to be GRANTED (with conditions) | Conditional permission GRANTED 08/12/2020 |
| 10 High Street | 20/02252/FPH | Replace five existing front elevation windows and one existing side elevation window with powder coated aluminium frames in Anthracite | PC to NHDC: recommendation for Permission to be GRANTED | Permission GRANTED 26/11/2020 |
| Land (known as Hunts Close) north of Ashwell Street and south of Lucas Lane between Hunts Ridge and East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane. | 20/00126/FP | Erection of 24 dwellings including creation of vehicular access off Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated public open space and landscaping (as amended by plans received 17.08.20). | PC to NHDC: Objection | Permission REFUSED 26/11/2021 |
| 4 Springhead | 20/01594/FPH | Insertion of dormer to existing rear roof slope. | PC August meeting PC to NHDC: recommendation for permission to be GRANTED | Still Pending |

Appendix F: Summary of accounts – December 2020

| | RECEIPTS | | £ less VAT | VAT | £ inc VAT |
|-----|--|--|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 63 | Nevilles Funeral Services | Rent for Chapel of Rest (Nov) | | | 68.75 |
| 64 | Bluegates Farm | Annual Cemetery land rental | | | 0.05 |
| 65 | Ashwell Business Bank Account | Ashwell Business Group donation of residual funds | | | 613.27 |
| 66 | Football Club | Part 2 payment for annual rent | | | 25.00 |
| 67 | Dignity Funerals | Interment of Ashes fee CW 20.19 | | | 140.00 |
| 68 | Santander | Interest 01/12/2021 | | | 0.17 |
| | | TOTAL | | | 847.24 |
| | PAYMENTS | | | | |
| 177 | J Porter | Reimbursement Annual Subscription for Microsoft Office | 63.99 | 16.00 | 79.99 |
| 178 | Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services | Cleaning of Public Toilets for Nov Inv no 2075 | 180.00 | | 180.00 |
| 179 | Dan Horne | Pavilion Roof Repair | 165.00 | | 165.00 |
| 180 | Duo Creative Services Ltd | Website monthly fee (Dec) Inv 9583 | 25.00 | 5.00 | 30.00 |
| 181 | EON | Electricity for Pavilion (inv on 19/11) | 6.24 | 0.33 | 6.57 |
| 182 | Herts Native Trees | Planting at Small Gains Inv no. 2021705 | 265.00 | | 265.00 |
| 183 | Gillian George Electrician | Work on Public Toilet Doors Auto Opening | 290.00 | | 290.00 |
| 184 | Edward's Cleaning and Maintenance Services | Part payment for clearing moss on path at Cemetery | 160.00 | | 160.00 |
| 185 | D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd | Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 19/9 Inv no 20938 | 137.00 | 27.40 | 164.40 |
| 186 | D J Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd | Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 23/9 Inv no 20908 | 185.00 | 37.00 | 222.00 |
| 187 | HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624 | tax&NI to Inland Revenue | 505.34 | | 505.34 |
| 188 | HCC Pensions-LGPS Account, | Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS | 720.33 | | 720.33 |
| 189 | CPM Playgrounds | Refurbishment of playground equipment | 360.00 | 72.00 | 432.00 |
| 190 | Castle Water | Water for the Cemetery Inv no 3011854 | 20.42 | | 20.42 |
| 191 | EON | Electricity for Public Toilets (inv on 21/12) | 12.63 | 0.63 | 13.26 |
| 192 | Castle Water | Water - Small Gains Inv no 3050089 for 1/10/2020-31/3/2021 | 46.55 | | 46.55 |
| 193 | Clerk | Salary December | 1,350.87 | | 1,350.87 |
| 194 | ECO | Salary December | 230.40 | | 230.40 |
| 195 | Deputy Clerk | Salary December | 808.86 | | 808.86 |
| 196 | Grounds Officer | Salary December | 149.95 | | 149.95 |
| | | TOTAL | 5,682.58 | 158.36 | 5,840.94 |
| | MONEY AT BANK | | | | |
| | | Current Account 31/12/2020 | 32,976.39 | | |
| | | Reserve Account 31/12/2020 | 20,701.82 | | |