



Ashington Parish Council

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday 8th February 2024 at 7.45pm Ashington School, Foster Lane

Present:

Councillors: S. Ball (Vice Chair), N. Carter, T. Kearney, P. Kerrey, G. MacPherson, J. Morris, T. Moss, N. Spiers (Chair), B. Wallace

Also present:

Clerk: Lee English

Horsham District Councillors: Philip Circus, Alan Manton

Members of the Public: 6

The Chairman reminded members of the public the requirement that they limit their participation to the Public Adjournment section of the meeting. If Members of the Public have questions for Police/Wardens & District/County Councillors, then the Clerk will pass these on if these individuals have left the meeting.

Members of the Public are reminded that Standing Orders allow for 5 minutes maximum participation.

034/24 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from:

Councillors: M. Woolley

County Councillor: Paul Marshall

Neighbourhood Wardens: Christina Arnold and Bryony Sparks

035/24 Declaration of Interests and notification of change of interest

The Chairman reminded Councillors that previous declarations still stand (as defined under the Localism Act 2011).

036/24 Minutes of the Parish Council meeting 11th January 2024

To approve and sign the minutes of the PC meeting dated 11th January 2024.

Proposed by Cllr Kearney, seconded by Cllr Carter and agreed by all.

037/24 Ashington Youth Club (AYC) Quarterly Review

Year 3, quarter 1 (1st November 2023 to 31st January 2024) –

- 733 attended in this quarter, an average of 66 per week (pre covid 30-36 per week).
- Busiest quarter on record.
- Years 6-9 most popular (ages 11-14).
- 16-18 year age range has regular attendance, but 15 year olds, still hardest to attract.
- Cost per attendee £2.99 (Last quarter average £3.39 and £5.58 last year). Target is £2.50.

- Objective this year is to secure the future of the club with a long lease on the building from ACCT. This would allow AYC to secure capital funding for building improvements including a new roof and solar panels.
- A new cooker has been installed. A local electrician installed and certified this for free.

038/24 Neighbourhood Wardens Report (Appendix 1)

It was noted that the Wardens require a replacement fridge in their office. As the community centre small hall (stage area) now has increased use due to the loss of the Scout Hall for general hire, the Wardens cannot always access the kitchen facilities. Clarity is required as to whether these types of costs are the responsibility of PC, ACCT or HDC? Cllr Moss will investigate availability of funds. If necessary, it was agreed that the purchase of a replacement fridge can be approved by email. **TM**

039/24 Reports from District & County Councillors

District Councillor Circus

1. In response to a resident's request regarding the way the bins are left blocking pavements on waste collection days, he has written to the head of the service to request that the waste collection operatives are considerate when they leave the emptied bins.
2. There is an HDC budget meeting coming up and he felt concern with regards to some of the proposed spending, such as £10.7m on The Capitol theatre in Horsham (£7m to achieve net zero emissions / remainder on refurbishment).
3. There are 2 by elections due in Southwater and Henfield.

District Councillor Manton

1. **Fairfield Way** – He is involved with residents regarding an issue with a tree in the road that is affecting a boundary fence in Morleys. Highways believe it is not their responsibility although Cllr Manton feels it is. Ongoing.
2. **Green Hedges** – The garage has been taken down at the rear of the development, although the front is still a mess. Cllrs noted some discrepancies between original plans and finished build. The neighbour still has an issue with the fence collapsing. Ongoing.

Questions –

1. **Swift bricks** – Cllr Carter mentioned that the Sussex Wildlife Trust have requested all new builds contain swift bricks, and asked how this was being dealt with by HDC? Both Cllrs had received emails regarding this and would keep an eye on it.

040/24 Public Adjournment – Members of the public can ask questions

1. **Public Works Loan** - A resident enquired as to how long there was left for the loan to run, and whether the residents were still paying £3 a year per household? The clerk noted that it was a £90k, 25-year loan and there was approx. 4 years remaining at £6200 per year. Cllr Wallace noted that the ACCT now have a fund to allow for the rebuilding the community centre in 50 years' time, so hopefully a public works loan would not be required for this again.
2. **Youth Club flooding of car park** - The ACCT Chair has been pressing WSCC on the matter. They have given an undertaking to address the ongoing problem regarding drainage issues.
3. **ACCT/PC working party** – The ACCT Chair thanked the council for embracing the idea and opportunity to work together. He also thanked Cllr Spiers for a very well managed meeting with Bellway in January.

The Chair thanked Cllr Circus and he left the meeting.

041/24 The Parish Yard update

Update from working party – Ashington Nursery have offered £100 per month to park up to 12 cars per day, 5 days a week on a 3-month basis. 38p per car per day rather than £1 hoped for.

Pros – Some money coming in from the site.

Reduces parking on London Road.

Reduces issues for staff from local residents.

Cons – Potential difficulty for cars pulling onto main road (bus stop next to it, and local cars parking on the Highways owned frontage)

Potential insurance issues.

If site left unsecured, any unauthorised access, could be costly to deal with.

It was discussed to get a formal licence drawn up could cost over £1100 and therefore take a year to recoup the cost.

It was asked of the working party if there were other options currently and it was updated that currently everything is on hold due to water neutrality issues and that there is planning permission for a hut only (no use of water facilities), and therefore would have to reapply for any other use. Cllr Morris noted that he had had a conversation with a planning officer recently who had suggested that the council do reapply, as although there had been no water usage in the previous 3 years, before that there had been due to cars being washed on site. Cllr Kerrey responded that on reviewing the original proposition (café) the council had underestimated what was required in the size of the facility and that it would need to be reviewed before reapplying. Also, whether there was any likelihood of being able to find anyone to run the facility as previous attempts had not produced any realistic propositions.

As well as resident's wishes for a meeting place/café in the village, it was also raised that the council needs a parish office and potentially the Wardens and parish office could be in one hub. It was noted that all of this would need a considerable amount of investment.

It was discussed that there needs to be renewed push to explore all options, whether to expand the working party etc. Cllr Kerrey will investigate re-costing the building with a larger café and potentially a meeting room on the side.

PY working party

042/24 Speedwatch update

January saw three sessions in the Billingshurst Road resulting in 72 reported Vehicles out of 573 total. A 13% average which sadly remains in line with current traffic records. Still awaiting update regarding speed sign posts.

043/24 Green initiatives update

The school have been set up with various bird feeding stations and a supply of food. They have also been given 5 varieties of sunflower seeds which will be planted at the school.

The hedgehog project has had 11 residents sign up so far, but more would be good. To help encourage more participants, the pupils at the school will design posters that can then be put in the noticeboards.

044/24 Annual Inspection of Council land

Quotes have been received for –

1. Dry balancing pond behind Chanctonbury (removal/reduction tress and vegetation and fallen tree from pond)
PC landscape contractor to carry out work £925 (approx. 3 days / 2 men amount of work)
Cllrs approved the work.
2. Trees behind 15 and 16 Chanctonbury (reduce/reshape 2 and remove 2)
Quote 1 - £1,200

- Quote 2 - £475 +vat
Cllrs approved quote 2. The successful contractor was Ben Aldrich Tree Services. **Clerk**
3. Nature Trail – awaiting quote **CFWD**

045/24 Parish councillor vacancy

HDC provided the “Notice of Vacancy” which was placed in the noticeboards and on the FB pages. If no by-election is requested by the 16th February, the vacancy can be filled by co-option.

Clerk proposes that if no election, interested parties contact the clerk for an application form to be returned by Friday 8th March. Applicant to introduce themselves at PC meeting 14th March and Cllrs can vote on suitable candidate for co-option. **Clerk**

046/24 Annual Review of ACCT/PC agreement

Cllrs Carter and Wallace to liaise with ACCT re the review.

NC & BW

047/24 Correspondence received for action

1. **HALC meeting and nomination for Chair** – 21st February, 7pm (Zoom).
Info passed to Cllrs Kearney and Moss.
2. **HDC Planning** are running a review of its Development Management function, in the form of a peer challenge to review where improvements may be made. Parkside, 28th February, 5.45-6.45pm. No volunteers.
3. **Little LifeSavers charity** – Ashington based, and providing nationwide coverage, they are looking for donations to enable them to continue to teach school children lifesaving CPR skills. A discussion was had; the good work of the charity was acknowledged, but it was conceded that as there isn't currently a parish council grants system in place they were unable to help at this time.

048/24 Correspondence received for Councillor information

1. **Swift bricks in new build homes** – Sussex Wildlife Trust are asking HDC to include in the Local Plan that the inclusion of swift bricks becomes mandatory in new build developments. They are requesting support at parish level. Both Elivia and Bellway are willing to look at this.
2. **MP Andrew Griffith letter** – incl. NPPF updated December 2023 to move away from top-down housing targets and greater weight for neighbourhood plans. He will be making representation on Local Plan consultations and would like to know if there any sites in the plan that parish have previously rejected (none for Ashington). He will continue to challenge unsustainable developments. He noted he will be happy to support Community Highway Schemes where they have parish and community support.
Cllr Manton updated that Andrew Griffith had submitted a strong objection to the proposed development by Bellway Homes at the Thakeham Mushroom Farm site and it was suggested by Cllr Spiers that it would be good to update the MP as to the situation in Ashington regarding the neighbourhood plan and the varying experiences with both developers. **Clerk**
3. **Bus Stop “Real Time Information” screens** – 4 are due to be installed in Ashington in the next couple of months. Thanks to County Cllr Paul Marshall for championing their installation in rural areas.
4. **Southern Water** will be undertaking work at the Ashington Wastewater Treatment Works (nr Broadbridge Farm) between February and December 2024. There will be an increase in traffic movements in the area. They are willing to attend a meeting if required. Clerk has requested that the works vehicles avoid using the village where possible.

049/24 Correspondence received for public interest – Appendix 2

050/24 Meetings attended by Councillors

Cllrs Carter, Moss and Morris – **Green initiatives** working party, various meetings.

Cllr Wallace – **Green initiatives with school** regarding the allotment area and growing sunflowers.

Cllr Carter – 24th January – **ACCT meeting**. The proposal for a joint working party was well received.

Cllr Kerrey – 30th January – Thakeham Parish Council meeting regarding **proposed Mushroom Farm site development**. The meeting was well attended with over 120+ people. Main concerns were the effect on local roads, water, sewage, noise, overdevelopment of the village.

Cllr Morris – 5th February – **Green initiatives with school**.

051/24 Matters raised by Councillors

Wardens – Cllr Wallace noted that following a meeting with some of the bereaved older people in the village, they had noted a lack of contact from the Wardens. It was requested that the Wardens steering group raise this with the Wardens.

NW Steering Group

Future use of any new community buildings from developments – Cllr Wallace noted some potential uses for any buildings that may be passed to the council from Neighbourhood Plan developments. It was noted this was some way off and discussions would be more pertinent later.

Bench outside Posthorses Playpark – Cllr Ball noted this bench is falling apart.

Clerk

Broken fence at top of Nature Trail – Cllr Ball noted several of the rails are broken. Clerk noted this section is WSCC PROW and will update them.

Clerk

Electricity pole opposite Pharmacy – Cllr Kearney noted this is leaning and has moved again recently. The clerk has reported this but will chase it.

Clerk

Pedestrian Crossing, London Road – Cllr Spiers requested this is added as an item on next month's agenda.

Clerk

052/24 Chairman's Announcements – none

PLANNING

053/24 Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting 25th January 2024

Cancelled as no new applications.

054/24 Planning Correspondence

1. **Thakeham PC** – An application for 247 homes at the former Thakeham Mushrooms site has been submitted by Bellway (DC/24/0021). There has been a substantial number of objections already from residents and consultees. Thakeham PC are inviting local councils to comment on the application. A discussion was had, and it was agreed to submit a response that objected to the application, highlighting the same concerns as other local councils namely highway access and parking, loss of general amenity etc. It was noted that Thakeham had commissioned its own transport survey recently and it may be something Ashington considers in the future.
2. **Rampion** – newsletter update <https://rampion2.com/newsletter/january-2024/>

Clerk

055/24 HDC Local Plan Review Update

Horsham District Council has published its proposed submission Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040 under regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Representations on the Local Plan can be made until **1st March 2024**.

For Ashington there is a site proposed next to Penn Gardens for an additional 75 houses. It fits in with the spatial strategy of the Neighbourhood Plan and the council were aware that when the plan was written it was likely that more houses would be proposed. The draft Local Plan notes 300 houses for Ashington. The Bellway Homes application (DC/23/0406) for 180 houses rather than the 150

allocated for that site in the neighbourhood plan, does not therefore correspond with the Local Plan total allocation. It was noted that some evidence base documents are out of date with contradictory housing numbers.

It was felt that if the proposal for additional 75 houses was to be supported, that the caveat should be added that there must not be excessive development on the other sites above the figures originally allocated. The clerk will draft a response to be sent to Cllrs.

Clerk

056/24 Neighbourhood Plan – Chanctonbury Nurseries ASH10

A brief outline of key dates (subject to change) –

Current – strimming on site to allow additional topographical survey work to take place.

Jan and Feb – additional fencing to be erected for security purposes.

May – “soft strip” of materials on site and additional ecology survey works.

May and June – demolition works to remove all buildings on site.

July to October – decontamination works to ground and foundations to be started.

057/24 Neighbourhood Plan – Land West of Ashington School ASH11

Further to the recently distributed “Community Update” leaflet from Bellway Homes and their attendance at the January parish council meeting, a letter was sent to the developer and Horsham District Council planning department reiterating the council’s objection to the application due to continued non-compliance to the neighbourhood plan. Cllr MacPherson was complimented on his very comprehensive and concise written response that was submitted.

Dialogue using Bellway’s intermediary stakeholder engagement company has ceased and correspondence will be directly with them in future, to try and resolve outstanding areas of concern.

Further to Cllr MacPherson’s comments at the January meeting regarding site access road / junction safety, County Cllr Paul Marshall subsequently contacted Highways to raise the matter. It was noted that no site visit was carried out initially as apparently the area was known to the case officer, but Highways will now arrange a site visit following ongoing concerns. Despite the parish council’s request to be in attendance during the site visit, this was ignored by Highways. Following their visit, their response is that they have decided that in principle there is nothing wrong with the junction, but that they have undertaken to request that Bellway reviews its “swept path analysis” for the entire junction. They are however ignoring the bigger issue of the impact traffic will have on the London Road and it is felt that this is probably because it falls between Highways Planning (who only need to deal with the immediate effects of the planning application site) and the Highways Authority (who would be responsible for London Road ie the infrastructure to support the site).

It was agreed to create a Neighbourhood Development Working Group with the purpose of having an overview of the Chanctonbury Nurseries site, the Land West of Ashington School site and the site next to Penn Gardens/Mousdell Close if that is included in the Local Plan. Cllrs MacPherson, Spiers and Wallace agreed to sit on the group. Bellway had requested further discussion regarding initial amendments to points raised previously by the council, and it was agreed that this would be undertaken by the working group. Who could then bring the information back to full council. Clerk to liaise with all concerned re a meeting.

Clerk

058/24 Planning Applications – none

059/24 New Enforcement Allegations

EN/24/0026 Alleged: installation of wood-burner chimney flue to garage extension. 20 Warminghurst Close, RH20 3QD

060/24 Horsham District Council Decisions

Approvals –

DC/23/2003 Installation of air source heat pump to rear elevation. 26 Warminghurst Close, RH20 3QD

Refusals – none

Withdrawals – none

Prior Notifications – none

Appeals – none

FINANCE

061/24 Correspondence received

1. Quarterly bank reconciliation for 31st December 2023 has been prepared and was approved by Cllr MacPherson.
2. Quarterly budget report for 31st December 2023 shows several areas of overspend –
 - Youth Worker, as 2 quarters from previous year paid this financial year.
 - Accountancy, £50 over due to external auditor increase and change of internal auditor.
 - Postage, £8 over due to banking correspondence.
3. Lamppost testing quote is £750 for 2-year certificate (previously £575). Cllrs approved. **Clerk**
4. NALC and SLCC have produced a new model employment contract for local councils.
Staffing committee to review clerk's contract? **Staffing Committee**
5. NALC have launched a new webpage to help address the many concerns raised about parish councils and banks.
6. Section 137 amount for 2024/25 is £10.81 (previously £9.93).
Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure.
7. Radikls – website and email host, annual review. Invoice due for next 3 months for £129.60 (previously £122.40) which covers 13 emails/security certificate/storage/website hosting.
Approved by Cllrs.
Annual review - Radikls took over from previous provider (EcomSolutions) in January 2021. Some Cllrs are finding the email service difficult to use. EcomSolutions was originally chosen as a local firm, but since transfer to a new provider, the service is less personal. It was noted that it is still an issue to be addressed when time permits.

062/24 Income

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------|
| £163.80 | Bank interest |
| £1428.80 | Savings interest (closure of NS&I) |

063/24 Expenditure (Appendix 3)

Cllrs approved the schedule of invoices for payment totalling **£4,920.16**

064/24 Date of next meetings

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Planning Committee: | 7:30pm on Thursday 22nd February 2024, Ashington School |
| Planning Committee: | 7:30pm on Thursday 7th March 2024, Ashington School |
| Annual Parish Meeting: | 7:45pm on Thursday 14th March 2024, Ashington School |
| Parish Council: | 8:00pm on Thursday 14th March 2024, Ashington School |

Members of the public were then asked to leave the meeting as Councillors needed to discuss confidential matters: Staffing matters.

Discussions were had regarding clerk hours and the following actions were approved by Cllrs –

1. Increase in clerk hours to 22 hours per week from April 2024 (approved January 2024 minute ref 028/24) to be facilitated by a change to contract.
2. 40 hrs overtime accrued to end of January 2024 to be paid.
3. Up to 4 hours per week overtime can be taken in February and March 2024.

It was noted that there are 4 hours still to be invoiced for the locum clerk, with the likelihood that several more will be required for assistance with year end accounts. Funds are available in the “contingency” budget to cover this.

Meeting closed at 9:15pm

Signed: **Dated:**

Appendix 1 – Warden Report

January 2024 Ashington

| | | | |
|---|-----------|--|-----------|
| Patrol hours TOTAL: | 78 | ASB incidents reported to us TOTAL: | 4 |
| Foot (high visibility) | 36 | Noise | 0 |
| Vehicle | 42 | Neighbours | 1 |
| Notices/warnings TOTAL: | 5 | Driving/vehicles | 3 |
| Verbal warning | 3 | Bicycles | 0 |
| Parking alert | 2 | Alcohol | 0 |
| Yellow card warning (ASB) | 0 | | |
| Community Protection Warning/Notice | 0 | | |
| Fixed Penalty Notice | 0 | Clear up/disposal reports TOTAL: | 2 |
| Reports into Police TOTAL: | 7 | Fly tipping / flyposting | 2 |
| Phone (including 101 and 999) | 3 | Graffiti | 0 |
| Online | 0 | Dog fouling | 0 |
| Intelligence report | 0 | Litter | 0 |
| Verbal | 4 | Drug litter | 0 |
| E-CINS cases (multi-agency reporting) | 0 | Hazards | 0 |
| Media Reports TOTAL: | 4 | | |
| Press release/Community magazines | 0 | | |
| Social media posts | 2 | Community events attended | 2 |
| Admin hours | 34 | School contact | 2 |
| Vulnerable people welfare checks | 19 | Youth engagement | 22 |
| Signposting | 4 | Reports to DVLA | 2 |
| Safeguarding referral | 1 | Reports to Operation Crackdown | 2 |

ASB

We received a report regarding an abusive driver that was challenged over their parking. All parties involved were spoken to and given words of advice.

We have been dealing with a new neighbour dispute in the village, we are working in partnership with other agencies and all involved.

Drugs were found in the Community Centre car park which have been disposed of safely. Thank you to the diligent member of the public for spotting them.

Parking/vehicles

We have been liaising with a resident regarding blocked driveways near the pharmacy.

We received reports about track bikes up by the church. We went out and patrolled the area, but couldn't find them.

An abandoned vehicle was reported to us, we managed to track down the owner and spoke with them about moving the vehicle.

We have been dealing with parking issues regarding staff from the nursery. We have been liaising with the nursery and residents.

Fly tipping/littering/graffiti

We reported fly tipping on the two roundabouts at the north of the village. We are awaiting Horsham District Council cleansing team to collect this rubbish. We also reported fly tipping along Old London Road, which has been removed.

Community engagement/events/meetings

We ran our first SEN group at Ashington Church. It was a really lovely supportive group of parents, and gave a real opportunity to parents to support each other and also a safe space to discuss any challenges they face and how they overcome them.

Patrols (foot/visible and car)

We have been on foot and vehicle patrols covering the whole of the parish, we specifically included areas that have been brought to our attention for various reasons. We are focusing a lot of our late patrols on providing a hi visibility presence.

Older, vulnerable people and youth

We have been making new year visits to our elderly and vulnerable.

We assisted Storrington with contact with a vulnerable resident in Washington, and offered support and advice about groups that she could attend.

We have been supporting one of our young people who is going through a difficult time and is dealing with this through drug use. We will continue to work with them, support and signpost where necessary.

Dog related issues

Nothing to report.

Cycling

Nothing to Report

Parish specific/other

We hopefully are meeting someone from highways to look at the abandoned caravan with us, as we still haven't managed to find out who the land belongs to.

We area searched for door to door sellers within two minutes of a phone call from a resident. Unfortunately we couldn't find them, despite searching every road and close in Ashington. We have been made aware that these are more on the increase lately and will continue to patrol and speak to them regarding whether they have a pedlar's licence to door to door sell.

We had a visit from Andrew Smith who is the newly appointed Head of housing and Communities at Horsham District Council. This was a chance for him to come and meet us, see what we do and offer any support we needed.

Social media/press

We attended social media training at Horsham to best make use of the platforms we have available.

Appendix 2 – Correspondence received for public interest

1. **West Sussex Recycling Centres** – Extension of booking system to all sites. From 12th February residents will need to pre-book a timed slot to visit a recycling centre.

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/waste-and-recycling/recycling-and-waste-prevention/recycling-centres/>

Appendix 3 – Expenditure

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|
| Lee English | Home Office (Jan 2024) | £26.00 |
| Lee English | Giff Gaff (mobile phone topup) | £6.00 |
| Lee English | Postage | £2.75 |
| Mark Adsett | Landscape gardening (Jan 2024) | £715.00 |
| Eon | Electricity - Parish Yard (Direct debit) | £40.00 |
| WSCC | Salaries and oncosts (Jan 2024) | £1,624.90 |
| Ashington CE First School | Hall hire for council meetings (Jan, Feb, Mar) | £150.00 |
| Nicholas Ball | Car parking (Playground inspection training) | £11.30 |
| John Morris | Seeds / bird food green initiatives (347/23 2.) | £89.61 |
| Radikls Ltd | Website and email hosting | £129.60 |
| Ashington Youth Club | Q2 2023-24 youth worker funding (310/23) | £2,125.00 |
| Total | | £4,920.16 |

All to be paid by Bank Transfer