

ASHMANSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Date: December 20th, 2011

Time: 7.30 pm

Place: Village Hall

Present: Alan Cox (Chairman) Carol O'Shaughnessy (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mark Benzing

Johnnie Johnson

Action

1. Apologies

Kieron Black, Ruth Kent (Clerk). We were sorry to learn that Ruth was ill in hospital and wished her a speedy recovery

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of November 3rd 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3. Planning Matters

a) Red Roses Garage, Ashmansworth

Awaiting a decision by BDBC

b) Barley Cottage, Ashmansworth

Permission granted by BDBC

c) 2 Chapel Cottages, Ashmansworth

Permission granted by BDBC

d) Wood House, Crux Easton

We noted this application without adverse comment but were unable to schedule an earlier meeting to debate this in more detail so missed the deadline for submitting comments or objections

e) Steeles Farm, Ashmansworth

There was an application (BDB/75499) for an extensive solar panel array in one of the fields at Steeles Farm. After thorough discussion, the majority view was that there was support for the aims (in Policy A6) of renewable energy and rural diversification. However, the proposed site is in a conservation area within the North Wessex Downs AONB. It is also at the junction of two footpaths which cross through the conservation area and close to a grade II listed building. The conservation area document for Ashmansworth specifically seeks to maintain the rural and remote character of the area and to protect views from the Conservation area. It was felt that the proposal would contradict these aims. In particular, the Parish Council object to the

Alan

proposal on the basis of policy A6 (ie the proposal has a significant adverse impact on the historic and natural landscape and landscape character). It was also felt that the proposal did not meet the test of Policy E6. Specifically, it was felt that the proposal is not sympathetic to the landscape character and quality of the area, as it would significantly damage the visual amenity and scenic quality and the setting of Ashmansworth (including views into and out of the settlement from the nearby footpaths) and, most importantly, would have an adverse effect on sense of place, sense of remoteness or tranquillity, and the enjoyment of the landscape from public rights of way (as specified by policy E6). There was also concern that allowing this proposal may well attract other similar proposals in the area, which would have an even greater adverse impact on the conservation area and the AONB. Alan was actioned to report our opinion to the case officer. It was suggested that policy A6 is designed to protect and therefore makes it very difficult for the current methods of producing sustainable energy to be located in an AONB/Conservation area - they should be encouraged but located in less sensitive areas.

However, it is noted that there was also a minority opinion that, while accepting the above facts, considered that the present application would scarcely be visible from local houses or highway, that the footpaths were not greatly used and in any case passed other unsightly parts of the farm (the proposed site is currently overgrown and close to derelict buildings and the footpaths almost impassable due to poaching and unsafe stiles) and that that no near neighbour has complained as far as we know, or attended this meeting, and some have positively supported it. It was also felt that Policy A6 was not self-consistent since very few renewable energy sources can have no significant adverse impact on the landscape character.

4. Local Roads

a) A343 After Alan reported that to Steve Goodall of HCC that there had been a minor accident at this junction, it was confirmed that Steve has placed an order to improve visibility at the Cross Lane junction and hopes the work will be done early in the new year.

Alan reported that he continued to be concerned at the level of large lorries using the A343 in preference to the A34/A303 and this was confirmed by councillors. He indicated that he is trying to gain support for having the road downgraded to B status and is lobbying HCC and affected parish councils.

Alan

b) Footpaths We have been invited by HCC to update the list of priority vegetation cutting on our Public Rights of Way. While we supported some, we felt that others should be added or removed from the list. Some paths we had not checked recently so councillors agreed to check for themselves or contact neighbours with a view to reporting back, via Alan, in very early January. Alan will copy the maps provided to councillors to assist this work.

Alan

All

c) Stiles Alan has written to Cllr Tom Thacker expressing our opinion on the value of stiles as opposed to kissing gates in our parish, but has received no reply so far.

5. Telephones/Broadband

We await reports of progress on this important topic!

6. War Memorial

Alan reported that he had now received a further quotation from a local company for cleaning our memorial which was considerable cheaper than previous quotations. We therefore decided against seeking a 50% grant from the War Memorials Trust since we felt confident we could raise the money from the village. Once cleaning is complete, we will be able to establish whether further restoration of the names engraved is required and seek quotations and possibly a further grant for this. It was agreed that Alan should invite donations to the Parish Council specifically for this proposed Jubilee Project. Although the work requires the better weather expected in the Spring, we should place an order with the company now.

Alan

7. Neighbourhood Watch. Nothing to report.

8. Council Plans

a) Parish co-operation Alan reported that he had had further discussions with the chairmen of East Woodhay and Highclere Parish Councils. Discussions included Penwood Village Hall, Disaster Recovery and the Jubilee.

It was reported that there is a local Heating Oil co-operative and Alan agreed to post details on the Calendar

Alan

Just before the deadline for commenting, Alan received details of the proposals for very extensive house building at Sandford. This is on the south edge of Newbury but adjacent to our area and would affect roads, rail and parking there, which would impact our residents. Alan submitted an objection and had copied this to councillors for information. There was also an extensive article on the subject in the latest Newbury Weekly News.

b) Diamond Jubilee Alan reported proposals for lighting beacons across the county and to give commemorative mugs to all our children

c) Localism We still await Cllr Mitchell planned meeting to discuss the impact of the government's Localism proposals once these become clearer. We will be represented by Kieron.

d) Emergency planning Alan reported that a plan covering local parishes had now been completed, including inputs for Ashmansworth. Copies will be posted on appropriate boards and issued to Councillors (by Alan)

Alan

e) Local Transport We had been led to expect that the bus service along the A343, including that which goes through Ashmansworth, was in danger of being terminated, but we have heard no more on this since. We are hopeful that the threat has gone away, at least for the time being!

f) Mobile Library The new service seems to be working but the timing is unsuitable for school age children during term time. Alan has raised this with Cllr Thacker but received no reply so far. Alan reported that he has found the new library timetable and will publish this.

Alan

g) LDF Alan confirmed that he had reported to BDBC that we endorsed his views on the proposed Local Development Framework, which covers planning for further housing development.

h) VDS Alan reported that he had received information on preparing a **Village**

Alan

	Design Statement , but that this was very lengthy so he planned to prepare a summary for consideration at a future meeting.	ongoing
i) Planning Guidelines	Mark reported that he is studying planning aspects with an aim to prepare a list of guidelines to aid our decision making on planning	Mark
9.	BDAPTC, HALC	
	Alan reported that he had been unable attend the recent Mayor's reception and workshop.	
10.	Finance Matters	
a. Budget	Ruth was actioned at our last meeting to report our requested Precept to BDBC. This has been confirmed.	Alan
b. Annual Audit	We agreed that Alan should publish the required notice reporting that our audit for 2010/11 has been approved, and that copies may be obtained from him by email or, for a small fee, on paper.	Alan
c. Invoice	We approved a cheque to be prepared payable to Ned Christian for grass cutting.	
11.	Correspondence received	
	None	
12.	Dates of Next Meeting	
	Tuesday 7 th February at 7.30pm in the Village Hall	
	The Meeting closed at 9.30pm	