

**Minutes of a meeting of Ashdon Parish Council, held on
Monday 16 December 2024, 7.30pm at Ashdon Village Hall.**

Present: Cllrs: Goodwin, Gray, Horrigan, Moran, Olley & Pardue.
In the Chair: Cllr Moran.
Clerk: Angela Balcombe.
Also present: 3 members of the public.

24/90. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Lee.

24/91. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

The minutes of 18 November 2024 were approved as a correct record of events.

Proposed: Cllr Horrigan. Seconded: Cllr Gray. All agreed

24/92. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

To receive any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests relating to items on the agenda.

Please note: all Councillors are Sole Trustees of the Village Hall.

Cllr Moran is a District Councillor for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).

24/93. MATTERS ARISING.

None.

24/94. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS.

Essex County Council (Cllr Foley). Apologies were received from Cllr Foley.

Uttlesford District Council (Cllr Moran). Devolution White Paper - calling for the abolishment of County/District Councils to be replaced with a Unitary Council and the election of a Mayor of Essex. It is unclear what the impact would be on Parish Councils. A 2.8% increase on Council Tax is expected to be agreed at the next full council meeting.

24/95. PUBLIC FORUM

Financial matters - it was suggested that financial controls haven't been right in the past, these need to be in order going forward. The Internal Auditor appears to have done a good job. The Chairman explained the PC will carry out a review of its work early next year and looking to the future more policies will be adopted as recommended.

Potholes - a lot still haven't been repaired. Residents were referred to the ECC website to make a claim for damage to tyres.

24/96. ASHDON CRICKET CLUB - REQUEST FOR DONATION.

To consider a donation of £100.00 towards the Santa Sleigh Ride to cover some of the cost of presents for the children.

Proposed: Cllr Moran. Seconded: Cllr Horrigan. All agreed.

24/97. PLANNING.

Cllr Moran declared a non-registerable interest in this application as he is a friend of the applicant. Cllr Moran left the meeting for this item.

Cllr Olley also declared a non-registerable interest in the following planning application and left the room for this item.

Application No: UTT/24/3066/HHF & UTT/24/3067/LB. Internal and external alterations, addition of dormer window and side extension log store.

Location: Turpins Cottage, Radwinter Road, Ashdon.

The proposed enlarged window on the North face (cable end) of the cottage is not in scale with the depth of all the first-floor cottage windows, it is very prominent, a design issue. There was concern that a second door would mean removing some of the historic elements of the cottage.

Cllrs Olley and Moran returned to the meeting.

24/98. FINANCE.

Payments:

103013 £45.00 J Moran (Plants for the War Memorial)

103014 £2,088.70 Ashdon Village Hall (Hall Hire £36.00, Reclaimed VAT £2,052.70)

103015 £96.00 M D Landscapes Ltd (Grass Cutting - All Saints)

103016 £160.00 A Everitt (War Memorial Hedges)

103017 £883.30 A Balcombe (Locum Clerk Costs)

103018 £331.35 Adams Harrison Solicitors (Outstanding Legal Services)

D/D £78.10 npower Business Solutions (Streetlighting October)

Cllr Horrigan checked the authenticity of the invoices against the cheques.

24/99. BUDGET & PRECEPT 2025/26.

The budget was agreed at £54,820.00, considering earmarked and general reserves the precept for 2025/26 was agreed at £45,310.00

Proposed: Cllr Horrigan. Seconded: Cllr Moran. All agreed.

24/00. INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW.

An update on completed actions was received and any outstanding actions as recommended by the Internal Auditor were considered. The Asset Register needs to be updated and testing of the website needs to be looked at.

24/01. POLICIES FOR ADOPTION.

It was agreed to adopt the following policies:

- Public Participation Policy. Agreed to adopt and publish on website.
- Training & Development Policy. It was agreed that this did not need to be published on the website but would be made available on request.

Proposed: Cllr Moran. Seconded: Cllr Olley. Cllr Pardue abstained.

- Reserves Policy. This had been recommended by the Internal Auditor, however, until a financial risk assessment has been carried out the policy is not complete. To be adopted once completed.

Digital Exclusion was mentioned - to be looked at in the New Year. Policies should be flexible, common sense guidelines. It was suggested that the Parish Council could now work towards the requirements of the Bronze Council Award (information available at ealc.gov.uk).

24/02. CEMETERY.

An update on the work done at the Cemetery was received. Topple testing needs doing and compost bins are needed. The area for the bins to be smoothed over as it is very uneven. A non-recyclable bin would be useful for rubbish/dog waste or signage could advise people to take their rubbish home. A further update to be received in January/February.

24/03. CLERKS INTERVIEWS.

Cllrs Olley and Moran to presented the Council with their recommendations for the clerk/RFO appointment following the interviews held on Friday 13 December. Five applications were received, three were interviewed. The applications were of a high standard and Cllr Moran will circulate the details to Councillors.

24/04. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Councillors are currently appointed to areas of interest/responsibility and make recommendations to full council for all decisions. This would normally be reviewed yearly at the Annual Meeting of the Council. It was agreed to look at this prior to the February meeting to see if everyone is happy with the process and their roles.

24/05. CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE.

PKF Littlejohn (telephone conversation). The Auditor will deal with the objections they have received under 'information brought to their attention' and not as formal objections (as they were received outside of the deadline). They have advised to budget for approx. 7 - 10 hours to carry out this work, a cost to the Parish Council of approx. £3,550.00. **The objections relate to the financial year 2023/24.**

Letter of complaint - the letter has been acknowledged.

Letter - objecting to the draft minutes of 18 November and agenda for 16 December and various other issues.

Ashdon Village Hall - information about the Village Hall for the Auditor.

Highways - temporary road closure of Fallowden Lane due to commence on 18 December 2024 for 3 days while Affinity Water undertakes stop tap and boundary box installation.

24/06. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA.

- District Councillor Locality Budget - funds are still available but applications must be in by March 2025.
- Cemetery Update.

24/07. MEETING DATES 2025.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month (except August).

20 January, 17 February, 17 March, 28 April, 19 May (Annual Meetings), 16 June, 21 July, 15 September, 20 October, 17 November (Budget Meeting), 15 December.

Close of meeting 20:49

Signed (Chairman):

Date: