

**Minutes of a meeting of Ashdon Parish Council, held on
Monday 17 February 2025, 7.30pm at Ashdon Village Hall.**

Present: Cllrs: Goodwin, Gray, Horrigan, Moran, Olley & Pardue.
In the Chair: Cllr Moran.
Clerk: Angela Balcombe.
Also present: 10 members of the public including Christine Curzon (Ashdon Cemetery)

25/22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

There were no apologies.

25/23. CASUAL VACANCY.

Ten electors have called for an election, the poll must be held by Good Friday, dates to be confirmed.

25/24. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

The minutes of 20 January 2025 were approved as a correct record of events.

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

Cllr Pardue requested that the Clerk post him a copy of the corrected minutes of December 2024 (regarding the date of Clerk interviews) as he has no evidence that they have been amended.

25/25. 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).

No other interests were declared.

25/26. MATTERS ARISING.

A brief update on any actions from the previous meeting.

(For information only, Councillors are reminded that no decisions can be made under this agenda item; Longfield Parish Council v Wright (1918) 88 LJ Ch 119).

- **Funding for PCSOs** - information on funding will be available once expressions of interest have been received. More funding has been received so they may have been saved. Agreed to find out more information and add to the next agenda if necessary.
- **Solicitor** - a summary of documents held has been received, these will be collected, logged and stored in the Clerks fire proof cabinet until a new solicitor is appointed.
- **Locality Budget** - applications must be in by March 2025. Two applications from Ashdon have been received along with two other applications from other parish councils.

25/27. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS.

Essex County Council (Cllr Foley).

Potholes - a list of outstanding and any new potholes to be sent to Cllr Foley for the next tranche of repairs. Some of the repaired potholes are already breaking up. Ashdon appears to be the worst area for potholes, some of which are due to culverts and gullies not being cleaned.

Speed Limits - Ashdon has been waiting for at least two years for funding for speed reduction measures in Radwinter Road, however Councillors were also concerned with the speed issue at Steventon End.

Devolution - Cllr Foley mentioned that he wasn't comfortable with the suspension of elections

Uttlesford District Council (Cllr Moran).

Devolution - it is expected that a Mayor will be elected in May 2026 with the Government Elections held in May 2027. County and District Councils will be dissolved with a move to a Unitary Authority in 2028.

Social Housing - UDC have no money in the budget for social housing next year but the sale of assets (Chesterfield Retail Park) will go towards social housing the year after. As no further work is to be carried out by UDC at Church Field, the Parish Council will arrange to cut/top the bottom area of Church Field annually.

25/28. PUBLIC FORUM.

- Rectory Lane potholes - Cllr Moran to take a look and list them in order of priority. Other areas will be looked at including outside Springfield.
- It was explained that meetings are no longer being recorded as it wasn't felt it was needed anymore.
- Change of Solicitor - Cllr Gray has taken advice from the EALC on this, no decision has yet been made, quotes will be obtained before one is appointed.
- Question 2 on Cemetery Progress, the old plan should be kept up to date.
- Phone Box at Crown Hill should be kept.
- Agenda items - it was explained that it is up to the Council what goes on the agenda.

25/29. CEMETERY PROGRESS.

Christine, who has been helping with the Cemetery work brought the Council up to date on progress so far. A spreadsheet has been created with all information logged/digitalised. A digital plan has been created with information on who is buried in which grave and which graves have been purchased but not yet used. Various forms (there were none previously), a table of fees and a set of regulations have been created. The next stage will be setting out procedures.

The council to discuss and decide on the following:

1. Should the cemetery plan be placed on the website with the names of the deceased marked? Various opinions were put forward and it was agreed not to include it on the website but to make it available on request.
2. Should the old cemetery plan be updated or do we rely on the digitalised version? It was agreed to rely on the digitalised version and to keep a paper copy. Burial books will be kept up to date. It was agreed to send the old historic plan to the Essex Record Office.

3. Does the Council approve the adoption of the new cemetery regulations and agree to review them annually? It was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda as Cllr Pardue has not seen the draft document as he doesn't have access to email.
4. Does the Council agree to adopt the new fees and to review them annually? The fees were agreed with one amendment; to increase the cost for non-residents in line with Linton Parish cost, with discretion.
Proposed: Cllr Olley. Seconded: Cllr Horrigan. Unanimous.
5. Does the Council approve the following forms and to review them annually?
 - Notice of Internment.
 - Application for erection of memorial stone.
 - Request to purchase an exclusive right of burial.
 - Application to make changes or additions on an existing memorial stone.
6. Does the Council agree that, in view of the existing trees, ashes will be interred beside the hedge backing onto the road, with a walkway primarily for the ease of interring ashes?
7. To agree the purchase of compost bins (budget 2025/26 £1,100.00). It was agreed that Cllr Gray can go ahead and order the bins up to the budgeted amount.
8. To agree membership of the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management; cost £100.00.

Items 5, 6 and 8 were unanimously agreed.

Proposed: Cllr Moran. Seconded: Cllr Horrigan.

The Council gave a huge vote of thanks to Christine for all her help and the amazing amount of work she and Cllr Gray have done. It was agreed that Christine could attend the next EALC Burial Course along with Cllr Gray.

25/30. ASHDON PRIMARY SCHOOL FUN RUN.

The race will take place on Bank Holiday Monday 5 May 2025. The Parish Council has budgeted £300.00 to support the event.

It was unanimously agreed to give a donation of £300.00.

25/31. FINANCE.

Payments:

103030 £711.04 Ashdon Village Hall (Hall Hire £30.00, Reclaimed VAT £681.04)
 103031 £300.00 M D Landscapes Ltd (Clear River Banks)
 103032 £279.54 Wel Medical Ltd (Defibrillator Batteries)
 103033 £617.40 A Balcombe (Locum Clerk Costs)
 103034 £300.00 Ashdon Primary School (Fun Run)
 103035 £100.00 Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (Membership)
 D/D £88.16 npower Business Solutions (Streetlighting October)

Cllr Horrigan checked the authenticity of invoices against cheques for both the January and February meetings.

Bank Balances 31 December 2024.

Current Account £25,271.71
 Savings Account £55,160.56
 Premium Account £1,098.88

25/32. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR.

It was agreed to appoint Victoria Waples as independent Internal Auditor for the financial year 2024/25. **Unanimously agreed.**

25/33. PLANNING.

Application No: UTT/24/2741/FUL. Change of use of agricultural land to equestrian use with erection of stables, gazebo wash down shelter and associated ménage.

Location: Guildhall, Church End, Church Lane, Ashdon.

Approved with conditions.

Application No: UTT/25/0074/TCA. Works to 2 no. Plum Ash trees to include uplift of bottom branches and crown reduction of 25% to allow for maintenance of grounds and reduce root interference with burial plots.

Payment for the work to be agreed on a future agenda.

25/34. PHONE BOX AT CROWN HILL.

BT plan to remove this phone box as it isn't used enough. Those who think it should stay should contact the local authority (UDC) within 90 days (Notice dated 31 January 2025). It was agreed that the phone box needs to stay as due to the poor mobile reception it is often used for emergency calls. The Clerk will write to BT.

25/35. 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, however as requested this has been brought forward to February.

Cllr Moran explained the current system which it was agreed was working well. A good example of this was the Cemetery item. Cllr Gray was responsible for all the work that went into producing the proposals, these were then discussed and agreed by full council.

Cllr Pardue said that Councillors responsibilities only exist when sitting as a Council and that Councillors should have a shared responsibility. He went on to say that he feels he is being excluded from information as he was unable to access emails relating to the appointment of a Clerk.

Cllr Moran proposed that the Council continue with the current system, this was seconded by Cllr Gray. A vote was taken with five for and one against, therefore the current system will continue.

25/36. OPEN SPACES.

- Replacement litter bin (parish owned) at the Rectory Lane Play Area. A new bin to be provided. Next agenda.
- Dead Commemorative oak tree - to decide whether or not to replace it. As the tree is not dead there was no need for replacement.

25/37. VILLAGE HALL.

Management Committee Update - although the Village Hall isn't normally discussed at Parish Council meetings, it was reported that the ceiling and flooring in the lobby is now all good.

25/38. WORLD WAR II 80TH ANNIVERSARY.

To consider marking the event in the Village. Next agenda.

25/39. CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE.

UDC - complimentary response regarding the Ashdon Emergency Plan, the Plan will be stored in UDC files.

Stephenson Buses - reply regarding the service, they say they are unaware of any gaps in the service and are operating to the Essex County Council timetable. Residents and businesses are welcome to report any issues to the Parish Council who will liaise with Stephenson Buses.

Residents email - protesting about the disruptive public behaviour at council meetings and council tax money being spent on 'frivolous and disingenuous' complaints.

War Memorial - a newspaper cutting from the Saffron Walden Weekly News dated June 1951 was handed out which gave details of the War Memorial Restoration Fund, which would suggest that the War Memorial was in need of repair. As there are Parish Council minutes from 1937 -1976 missing it was not possible to find any further information on this. Moving forward, the Parish Council has responsibility for the War Memorial and it was stated that this was now the end of the matter.

25/40. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA.

- Year-end recommendations by the Internal Auditor.
- Risk Assessment, Fixed Asset Register, Reserves Policy and creation of a calendar of recurring items.
- Adoption of Cemetery Regulations.
- World War II.
- Litter Pick.
- Date of Parish Meeting.

25/41. MEETING DATES 2025.

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

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 21:33

Signed (Chairman):

Date: