

**Minutes of Ashford Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 20 December 2018 in the Church Hall at 7.30pm.**

<b>Chaired by: Councillor G Holder</b>	<b>Clerked by: Sue Squire</b>
<p><b>Present: Councillors</b></p> <p><b>Mrs J Bosley</b>  <b>G Holder</b>  <b>V Lawson</b>  <b>Mrs S Sampson</b>  <b>Mrs B Sandwell</b>  <b>J Szymankiewicz</b></p> <p><b>11 Members of the public</b></p>	<p><b>Agenda: -</b></p> <p>Items raised by members of the public  Apologies  Declarations of Interest  Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018  Reports  Matters Arising  Planning &amp; Planning Correspondence  Finance  Correspondence  Matters raised by Councillors / Clerk  Items for the next Agenda  Date of next meeting</p>
	<b>Action:</b>
80.	<p><b>Public Participation.</b></p> <p><b>80.1 Four questions relating to procedures at recent Ashford Parish Council Meetings.</b></p> <p>The parishioner asked for the questions to be minuted in full which were read to the meeting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could the APC please say when they will be making a detailed written response to a complaint made by Mr Hall and other signatories which was submitted to the APC prior to the October APC meeting? The Working Party (WP) forwarded a detailed draft rebuttal on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to assist in the formation of a response to the complaint, in light of the serious nature of the allegations and the derogatory comments made, which reflect on the character and integrity of those involved in the WP.  Unless a comprehensive response is made, the public are likely to accept the veracity of the complaint, as well as consider that the APC approved its content.  In the WP's response provided on 15<sup>th</sup> November the WP indicated that, to limit its length, much supporting material was omitted from the submission although this had been prepared and is available for review. Could the APC also confirm that the further supporting evidence will be reviewed to enable an accurate and comprehensive response to be provided?</li> <li>2. Could the Chair please indicate why the above complaint and the separate unrelated complaint made by the Parish Clerk on 18 October 2018, both involving APC councillors, were permitted to be made public, both orally and minuted, (without having been validated in any way) rather than having them immediately referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation by the NDC Ethics committee? This, I understand, is a NDC requirement to help ensure compliance with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. District Councillor Davis confirmed this requirement at the October APC meeting stressing that "allegations about Councillors was a Code of Conduct matter" (see APC minutes).</li> <li>3. Under the Councillors' Code of Conduct, is it not the case that parish councillors should declare any prejudicial interest? For example, direct family members of three of the APC councillors are understood to have been signatories to both the original complaint by Mr Hall and other signatories in October, and also the follow up complaint distributed by Mr Hall at the APC meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Is it not the case that APC councillors related in this way should reasonably be considered to have held a prejudicial interest in the matter and consequently, should have declared such interest in and withdrawn from any involvement, discussion or decisions on the substance of the complaints?</li> <li>4. In these circumstances, does it not follow that recent APC decisions in regard to the WP may have been substantially prejudiced by possible breach of NDC protocol and code of conduct requirements for councillors arising from: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the manner in which the complaints have been handled (i.e. without a thorough investigation into all the facts);</li> <li>(b) the non-declaration of prejudicial interests?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>There was a final question to clarify Minute No. 72.5 (November 2018) regarding the Neighbourhood Plan and putting the process in order. What process is referred to?</p> <p>Councillor Holder and the Clerk responded as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The letter was private, from a parishioner to Parish Councillors and not in the public domain. Councillor Holder had spoken to Mr Hall who did not require a reply.</li> <li>2. In response to question 2, the Parish Clerk is not bound by the Code of Conduct, referred to on a number of occasions within the questions posed to this meeting as the Councillors Code of Conduct, and it is for this reason that the Code does not apply to Clerks. The statement</li> </ol>

	<p>read by the Clerk was exactly that, a statement, not a complaint. Had it been a complaint, the Clerk would have had no hesitation in forwarding it to the Monitoring Officer without reference to any Councillor or the Parish Council. Parish Clerks are employed to give procedural and legal advice. It was for this reason that the statement was read, as the Clerk felt it was her duty to point these issues out. She considered it part of her job and was doing what she is paid to do. If the Clerk had been out of order, the Monitoring Officer would have wasted no time in contacting her.</p> <p>3. Councillor Holder had taken advice where it had been ascertained that Councillors are not responsible for family members and what they do.</p> <p>4. Councillor Holder was completely comfortable with the actions of the Parish Council and the visit of the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The parishioner felt that the Monitoring Officer did not have time to give consideration to the letter before giving advice and in response, Councillor Holder advised that the letter would have been studied and should it have been considered it was necessary to raise issues, this would have been done.</p> <p>The parishioner advised that no one on the Working Party had been spoken to or by the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Councillor Holder advised that the October complaint would be dealt with separately. Question 5 was covered under Minute No. 83.</p> <p>At this point in the meeting, Mr Hall advised that a colleague was putting his nine page letter into a judicial document. The Parish Council took a policy decision that it was in the best interest to reformat an unrepresentative Working Party.</p> <p>The parishioner felt that the reason given for the dissolution of the Working Party was that the process needed to be put in order.</p>	GH – Jan Meeting
81.	<b>Apologies.</b> Councillor J Bleach, County Councillor Mrs C Chugg, District Councillor Mrs A Davis.	
82.	<b>Declarations of Interest.</b> None.	
83.	<p><b>Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018.</b> <b>Approved and signed as a correct record after Minute No. 72.5 was amended to read ‘the Parish Council when put to the vote were uncomfortable with the way the Working Party had proceeded and were proceeding.’</b></p> <p><b>The Part II Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 were circulated to Councillors.</b> <b>Approved and signed as a correct record.</b></p>	
84.	<p><b>Reports:</b></p> <p><b>84.1 Police.</b> The December 2018 Newsletter had been circulated to Councillors and sent for inclusion on the website.</p> <p><b>84.2 County Councillor Mrs C Chugg.</b> Written Report received and circulated which covered: Investing in Devon application submitted by Ashford Parish Council for the sum of £5,000 had been successful, Children’s Services, adult social / domiciliary care and carers contract.</p> <p><b>84.3 District Councillor Mrs A Davis.</b> Written Report received and circulated which covered Christmas recycling.</p> <p><b>84.4 Councillor V Lawson.</b> Defibrillator Check. In order.</p> <p><b>84.5 Neighbourhood Plan.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was noted that Mr Hall’s Report had been circulated</li> <li>• A reply was noted from Devon Communities Together following an in principle invitation for Dawn Eckhart to assist subject to potential costs incurred. There was the possibility to progressing with a new Working Party for a Neighbourhood Plan. The criteria had been forwarded and the Parish Council could advertise for members. Previous members can apply and the criteria would be followed when applications were considered. Details to be put on the website and via the Ashford Communications. Councillor Holder stressed that the Parish Council must not loose sight of the fact that many hours had been put in and he thanked all members of the Working Party for their efforts.</li> </ul>	Clerk

	<p>Councillor Holder had contacted a senior planning officer at North Devon Council and his secretary, both of which commented that Ashford may or may not need a Neighbourhood Plan going forward and it was for the Parish Council to decide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was noted that Groundwork UK had been advised that an application would not be submitted in 2018/19 and that the current intention is to reapply in 2019/20. An acknowledgement from Groundwork UK had been received.</li> <li>To draft a reply to the two letters received from a parishioner in connection to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Chairman advised that a verbal reply had been given and was considered satisfactory by the author of the letters.</li> </ul>	
85.	<p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <p><b>85.1 North Devon Link Road Planning Application.</b> It was noted that this Parish's wholehearted support had been submitted in respect of the improvements.</p> <p><b>85.2 Gas Leak in Strand Lane.</b> There was no further information regarding the second leak.</p> <p><b>85.3 Standing Orders / Delegatory Powers.</b> It was noted that the document had been updated to incorporate suggestions of the Devon Association of Local Councils and giving the Clerk delegatory powers as previously agreed.</p> <p><b>85.4 Proposed Play Area.</b> It was noted that an Investing in Devon application had been submitted in the sum of £5,000 in respect of purchase of the land and legal fees involved. In her Report, County Councillor Mrs Chugg had confirmed this had been approved.</p> <p>Councillor Holder advised that Renew Holdings had agreed to sell the land, measuring 600 sq. metres to the Parish Council for £1,000.00. <b>Proposed by Councillor Holder to proceed with the purchase. Seconded by Councillor Lawson. Unanimously agreed.</b></p> <p>An advertisement to be put on the website inviting people to join a Steering Group.</p> <p><b>85.5 Light in the telephone box library.</b> Councillor Lawson advised that it is not possible to obtain a 12v motion sensor and had accessed an alternative which could be used as a back up. To be an item on the January 2019 Agenda.</p> <p><b>85.6 Ashford Parish Churchyard.</b> Councillors discussed the provision of a Cemetery. The Clerk to write to the owner of some land who it was understand was willing to consider the disposal of part of a field in which a development was taking place enquiring if they would consider selling part of it for a Cemetery and car park.</p> <p><b>85.7 Freedom of Information Act Request.</b> The details had been received and was in the process of being made ready for a reply to be sent.</p> <p><b>85.8 Emergency Plan.</b> It was noted that the Clerk was in the process of contacting the names of those mention on the Plan to gain approval to be a listed contact.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>January Agenda</p> <p>Clerk</p>
86.	<p><b>Planning &amp; Planning Correspondence.</b></p> <p><b>86.1 There were no Planning Applications to consider.</b></p> <p><b>86.2 Planning Correspondence. There was no Planning Correspondence to consider.</b></p>	
87.	<p><b>Finance.</b></p> <p><b>87.1 Balances. NatWest Current Account as at 20 November 2018: £6,811.52</b></p> <p>Budgetary figures for November 2018 were circulated to Councillors.</p> <p><b>87.2 North Devon Record Office / South West Heritage Trust.</b> Letter requesting a donation for three years to help keep the Record Office in North Devon. <b>Proposed by Councillor Lawson to donate the sum of £50.00 for three years. Seconded by Councillor Mrs Bosley. Unanimously agreed.</b></p> <p><b>87.3 The following payments were approved and authorised:</b> <b>Mrs S Squire</b> December Salary (Councillors were given the details) <b>Redacted under DPA</b> There is an amount of overtime from 18/10/18 to 15/11/18 and additional hours in respect of the</p>	<p>Clerk to advise</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Ch.No. 061</p>

