

**Minutes of the meeting of Alconbury Parish Council
held on Tuesday 28th January 2014 at Alconbury Memorial Hall.**

Councillors present: Mrs. E. Adams, Mr. A. Bush, Mrs. J. Aylott (Chairman), Mrs. E. Elphick, Mr. R. Sale, Mr. S. Tarabella, Mr. P. Watson & Mr. A. Welsh.

Also present: County Cllr. P. Ashcroft, County Cllr. P. Brown, District Cllr. K. Baker, Mrs. D. Benham (Clerk) & 2 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: Cllr. L. Isles (Work commitment) & Cllr. K. Tarabella (Work commitment)

2. Declaration of Interests: Cllr. Adams declared an interest in item 12, as her husband is an allotment holder and in item 22b, being a committee member of Alconbury Sports and Social Club. Cllr. R. Sale & Cllr. A. Bush declared an interest in item 22a, being the two councillors who were claiming travelling expenses.

3. To approve the minutes of the previous meetings held on 26th November 2013 and 17th December 2013: Approval of the minutes of 26th November proposed by Cllr. Welsh, seconded by Cllr. Bush, unanimously agreed. Approval of the minutes of the closed part of the meeting proposed by Cllr. Welsh, seconded by Cllr. Adams, unanimously agreed. Approval of the minutes of 17th December proposed by Cllr. Watson, seconded by Cllr. Adams, unanimously agreed.

4. Councillor vacancy: Cllr. K. Tarabella had been sent a Declaration of Acceptance to sign and a Registration of Members Interests form to complete and send to HDC. Cllr. Aylott will place a new notice on the board to advertise the remaining vacancy.

5. Reports from District & County Councillors: District Cllr. Baker advised that he had attended the hearing on the planning appeal for the former Megatron site. Cllr. Baker had received an invitation to visit the Truck Stop to listen to the owners plans for new facilities.
County Cllr. Ashcroft advised that the 46a service was secure until October.
County Cllr. Brown advised that Cambridgeshire Future Transport meetings were ongoing and that he would be pressing for rural areas to keep their transport.
CCC are finalising their budget and this would likely result in a 1.9% increase in the Council Tax. CCC are looking to remove the subsidy from the Cromwell Museum but a consultant had been appointed to look into ways of keeping the museum open.
CCC are to adopt a committee system of governing, although the structure has yet to be finalised and this system is likely to be more expensive.
The Huntingdon Town Centre development is progressing well, with Chequers Court now demolished and building due to start in the spring. The western link road will open late March/April.

6. Local Highway Improvement Initiative: The Clerk had completed the application for funding to change the signage from give way to stop at the junction of Rusts Lane and High Street. Applicants were invited to give a presentation to the panel on 9th January and the results should be known in a few weeks time.

7. Cambridgeshire Future Transport Meeting: Questionnaires were delivered to every household and 5 drop boxes were placed around the village. The Clerk collected 19

completed questionnaires from the boxes and has passed them on to CCC. Mr. Roger Read volunteered to join the working party looking into future transport needs and will attend the first meeting on 12th March.

8. Huntingdonshire Parish Conference: The Clerk attended the conference on 3rd December. The first part concentrated on the financial pressures on both the County Council and District Council over the coming 5 year period. It was made very clear by a series of speakers that the situation was very serious and that all services were being reviewed in order to make substantial savings. The second part of the conference focused on how Parish Councils might fill the gaps when services are reduced, how volunteers could be used to assist in this, opportunities for funding and how to get help with completing applications. The event report has been forwarded to all councillors.

9. Village entrance feature: Cllr. Sale has not had time to produce a drawing yet. Councillors agreed that the Clerk should arrange a meeting with Highways to discuss the proposed project.

10. Update on Alconbury Weald: There had been no liaison meeting since the last Parish Council meeting.

11. Brook tidy and wildlife survey: Cllr. Isles and the Clerk are due to meet with Andrew Walters from Keep Britain Tidy, on 6th February. Mr Walters has suggested 1st or 8th March for the brook tidy but councillors agreed that in view of the present water level, this was too early. Clerk to ask for some alternative dates in late April/May.

12. Allotments: To be removed from the agenda.

13. ASSC: Cllr. Adams advised that the Entertainment Committee had organised lots of good events including a Christmas party attended by 70 children. The new business plan was currently with the committee for comment. Mr Berrington had joined the Hunts Forum and was looking to apply for grants to improve the kitchen and toilets. Meanwhile, the existing kitchen had received a thorough clean and a working party had been organised to clean the function room. More volunteers would be most welcome.

14. Community Orchard/Trees: Cllr. Tarabella had inspected the orchard and all the trees appear to be doing well. Cllr. Tarabella will check whether there is room to plant any more trees with Bridgit Halford. Cllr. Aylott to look into labelling for the trees. Cllr. Tarabella will monitor the condition of the hedge around the sports field. Clerk to contact Global Tree Solutions to ask them to revisit one of trees on the green as the work does not appear to have been completed as per the quotation.

15. Memorial Hall: Since the meeting, Cllr. Aylott has advised that a new hiring agreement and terms and conditions have been finalised for commercial hirers and the Memorial Hall's reserve deposit account has been reinvested to obtain a better interest rate.

16. Neighbourhood Watch: Cllr. Bush had been unable to attend the last meeting. Crime report for October shows 4 recorded crimes. Crime report for November shows 3 recorded crimes. It was agreed that residents should report any traffic violations or perceived violations, directly to the police. If a resident witnesses a vehicle causing damage to the bridge, it would be useful to also advise the Clerk, so that this can be reported to Highways for repair.

17. Playgrounds: Creative Play have completed the repairs to Bramble End and the Clerk is in contact with Speedi Signs with regard to getting replacement “No dogs” signs. The missing fixings for the toddler multiplay unit at ASSC play area, have been fitted free of charge by BH Doors and Engineering Ltd and ASSC have repaired the bench and dealt with the trip hazards around the entrance. All items on the safety inspection have now been completed. Cllr. Watson to report wear on one of the swing seats to ASSC.

18. Youth Group: Cllr. Adams advised that 49 juniors and 37 seniors attended the last club night. Finances were in a healthy state and new equipment had been purchased, although there is still a shortage of volunteers. Urban & Civic had made a third payment to the Youth Group and it is hoped that they will continue with their support.

19. Website: The Clerk had obtained a quotation from another provider, for comparison against current costs.

20. Infrastructure report:

a) Churchyard – nothing to report.

b) Village Green – Councillors noted that recent work carried out by Highways’s contractors at the junction of Rusts Lane and High Street, had left the adjacent area of village green in a poor state.

c) Roads and footpaths – Maypole footbridge repairs are now complete. The Clerk had received a complaint about off road vehicles using the ford and surrounding grass at the end of Polecat Lane. The complaint has been passed to the local PCSO and Highways to deal.

d) General – The new grit bins are all now in the correct positions. A complaint about an uneven manhole cover outside 3 Field Close is being dealt with by Anglian Water.

21. Planning.

Update on previously discussed applications:

1300666FUL – Change of use from vacant land to provide six permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers. Former Megatron site, Ermine Street, Alconbury. District Cllr. Baker and Cllr. Welsh attended the appeal hearing on 14th January. The Inspector decided that it was necessary to hold a public enquiry. Date to be advised.

1301630FUL – Alteration of dormer window to doorway and formation of balcony area on flat roof and addition of render to front elevation. A further drawing had been received showing an increase in the size of the screening on the balcony. Councillors agreed that this was an improvement on the original design, therefore no further comment was required.

22. Financial report:

a) To agree a payment towards travel expenses for Cllr. Bush and Cllr. Sale, who had attended training at Sutton.

Cllr. Welsh proposed that Cllr. Bush and Cllr. Sale should each receive £54 towards their travel expenses. Seconded by Cllr. Aylott and unanimously agreed.

Cllr. Bush and Cllr. Sale took no part in the vote having both declared an interest.

b) To agree a donation towards grounds maintenance at Alconbury Sports and Social Club. Cllr. Aylott proposed that the second payment of £2500, which had been budgeted for, be paid to ASSC. Seconded by Cllr. Elphick and unanimously agreed.

Cllr. Adams did not take part in the vote having declared an interest.

c) Payment of outstanding debts.

Cllr. Aylott proposed retrospective approval of payment of items (1) to (5) and approval of payment of items (6) to (12). Seconded by Cllr. Elphick, unanimously agreed.

(1) Cq. No. 752 Hags-SMP Ltd, Fixings for ASSC play area.	£29.70
(2) Cq. No. 753 CAPALC, councillor traing courses.	£175.00
(3) Cq. No. 754 Global Tree Solutions, tree work.	£1400.00
(4) Cq. No. 755 Mrs. D. Benham, wages and expenses for December.	£590.59
(5) Cq. No. 756 HMRC, PAYE & NI	£55.40
(6) Cq. No. 757 HDC, Loan repayment 1 st instalment.	£2030.00
(7) Cq. No. 758 Creative Play, repairs to Bramble End.	£306.00
(8) Cq. No. 759 Mr. & Mrs. Ayres, Rent for allotment land.	£1000.00
(9) Cq. No. 760 Donation towards ground maintenance at ASSC	£2500.00
(10)Cq. No. 761 Mrs. D. Benham, wages & expenses for January.	£732.73
(11)Cq. No. 762 HMRC, PAYE & NI	£55.20
(12)Cq. No. 763 Easiprint, newsletters.	£154.00
(13)Cq. No. 764 Mr. A. Bush, expenses incurred attending training.	£54.00
(14)Cq. No. 765 Mr. R. Sale, expenses incurred attending training.	£54.00

Cllrs. Adams, Bush and Sale did not take part in the vote, all having declared an interest in one of the payments being approved.

d) Current position.

A copy of the receipts and payments and bank reconciliation was handed to each councillor. A copy will be attached to the minutes. The bank statements were available for inspection and Cllr. Bush confirmed that the balances in the bank account were correct as shown on the bank reconciliation.

e) Update on the investigations into the Parish Council's finances.

The Clerk advised that she had written to HMRC regarding the error in the VAT refund claim made by Mrs Sharp. As requested, they have deducted the overpayment of £321.48 from the latest claim.

Mrs Sharp appeared at Peterborough County Court on 10th January where she pleaded guilty to the charge of Fraud, contrary to section 1 of the Fraud Act 2006 and not guilty to the charge of misconduct in a public office. The Crown Prosecution Service have decided not to pursue the second charge and have advised that it would make no difference to the sentencing and would allow the case to be concluded sooner.

The case was adjourned so that reports can be prepared before sentencing takes place on 7th March. The Chairman advised that once the case has been concluded, a letter will be sent to all residents giving full details of what has happened.

f) To complete and sign the Annual Return for year ending 31st March 2013.

The external auditor PKF Littlejohn, who have been kept fully informed of the ongoing investigations, have previously advised that an Annual Return would not be required for year ending 31st March 2013 and that they would instead, issue a Report in the Public Interest. However, PKF Littlejohn have since been advised by the Audit Commission that an Annual Return is required.

Year end accounts have already been produced and agreed and signed in the closed session of the Parish Council meeting held on October 29th 2013. The Clerk had completed Section 1 and Section 2 on the Annual Return and all councillors present were given the opportunity to look at the document and to ask questions.

Cllr. Welsh proposed that the Chairman and Clerk should sign section 1, Statement of Accounts and Section 2, Annual Governance Statement, on the completed Annual Return. Seconded by Cllr. Elphick and unanimously agreed.

The Clerk has advised PFK Littlejohn that an internal audit will not be carried out on this occasion and has agreed to provide them with a report of the investigations that she had carried out since the fraud was discovered in May, including any recommendations and actions that have been taken. The notice of elector's rights had been placed on the notice board on 27th February.

23. Correspondence:

- a) e-mail regarding an ancient Alconbury miller's diary – to be referred to Hunts. Historical Society and the Parish Pump magazine editors.
- b) Letter of thanks from Alconbury Thursday Club for the donation of £150.
- c) Certificate handed to Cllr. S. Tarabella for attending Code of Conduct training on 5th November 2013.
- d) Cycle Legacy Grants.

24. New agenda items for the next meeting:

Clerk to contact Balfour Beatty to ask whether the street light outside 14 Manor Lane could be reinstated and to enquire whether lighting could be installed along North Road to ASSC.

Cllr. Aylott and Cllr. Sale to carry out the Clerk's appraisal on Tuesday 4th February.

25. Date of the next meeting: 25th February 2014, starting at 7.30pm at Alconbury Memorial Hall.

Signed.....

Date.....