

Highlights from Ashover Parish Council (APC) meeting: 17 October 2023

Minutes for the above meeting aren't yet available though the agenda of what was discussed can be found here on the parish council's website.

<https://www.ashover-pc.gov.uk/uploads/agenda-17102023.pdf?v=1696945205>

The following is just a summary of the main topics discussed:

Public Speaking

Members of the public spoke on issues relating to outside events, noise and light pollution and wildlife concerns.

Parish Maintenance

Contracts: Minor maintenance contracts were approved along with further cemetery maintenance and a new contract was awarded for flowerbed maintenance outside the public toilets and adjacent to the Black Swan.

Rights of Way maintenance: At a previous PC meeting a discussion paper was presented describing how maintenance arrangements for keeping our 50+ miles of footpaths clear of overgrowth have been unchanged for some years and have shown to be increasingly out of step with needs. This is especially evident in the summer months, much to the disappointment of parish residents and visitors. It was therefore agreed that £1,000 would be made available to support additional vegetation clearance on rights of way.

Bylaws: Following recent reports in social media, about dogs not being kept on leads in Ashover's cemetery, Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) notices have been re-posted on entrances to the cemetery reminding dog owners of their obligations.

A632 safety issues

Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs). Derbyshire County Council (DCC) is in the process of installing poles at Kelstedge and two SIDs will be installed once this work has been completed.

Continuing concerns about safety on the A632 were discussed and carried forward to the 'Public Meeting' item set out below.

River Amber

The Parish Council has continued to correspond with Lee Rowley MP on the issue of pollution in the river Amber and two updates were discussed.

Environment Agency (EA) report

For some months, sondes (water sampling kit) have been in place upstream of Kelstedge and the latest results from EA have shown pollution from human activity during rainfall and non-rainfall periods. This data is being used to direct where the EA will carry out regulatory inspections this year to target sources of pollution in the area.

We have asked the EA for timelines and next steps if pollutants are found at these sites during upcoming inspections.

Updates from Severn Trent.

Through Lee Rowley, the Parish Council has been expressing frustration at the quality and frequency of updates from Severn Trent. The recent, detailed update from their CEO, Liv Garfield, has been welcome and we have asked that this turns into a more regular dialogue. To this end, we now have designated points of contact within Severn Trent but in providing this information they have made the point that the significant investment decisions of particular interest to our parish will not be made until the New Year.

Public Meeting

During the September meeting it was agreed there should be a further public meeting on safety along the A632 and pollution in the river Amber and the timing of this was discussed again last week.

Whilst public pressure for an early meeting was recognised it was agreed that scheduling it for Spring 2024 was likely to be optimal. This is because the significance for these organisations (DCC and Severn Trent) is the potential for substantial investment and it will clearly be hard data which drives their decision-making. By Spring next year data from Severn Trent and the Environment Agency in relation to the river Amber should be available. Similarly, data from the Speed Indicator Devices on the A632 would be available, as should the results of DCC's programme for safety improvements.

Climate Change Working Group

The Minutes of the Climate Change Working Group held on 28/09/2023 were approved. Highlights are the 'wildlife corridor' initiative, which is being progressed with landowners, and plans to engage with the Primary School on environmental projects. The group continues to work with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and DCC who are progressing their own initiative under the 'Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy'.

Parish Events

The Christmas Lights Switch-on is planned for Sunday 03/12/2023. On the horizon for next year is Remembering D-Day 80 years on: 6 June 2024. This marks 80 years since the D-Day landings, the largest amphibious operation in history, which marked the beginning of the liberation of France and Western Europe. Initiatives to mark the occasion will be developed in the coming months.

News Items

Articles continue to be posted on the Parish Council's website and Facebook and in turn some of these have been included in Wings magazine. The Parish Council's What's On calendar (on the website) highlights parish events over the coming months – 20+ events were featured for the month of October. Preparation for Autumn's parish newsletter has begun and contributions have been invited.

NEDDC Consultation

NEDDC has been undertaking a review of Polling Districts and Places. Our arrangements covering the Parish Hall, Uppertown and Milltown are unchanged.

Section 137 Grants

It was agreed community grants for Christmas activities would be awarded to:-
Ashover Parochial Church Council (Church Lights for Christmas event)
Ashover Acorns Play Group
Ashover All Saints Church Choir (singing at Christmas event)
Ashover Brass Band (playing at the Christmas event)
Ashover Seniors

Finance Working Group Meeting and Precept 2024/2025

The Minutes of the Finance Working Group Meeting held 03 October 2023 were approved and recommendations resolved. Having deliberated the budget for the Financial Year 2024/2025, an anticipated realistic income figure of £11,090.00 set against an anticipated expenditure figure of £93,170.00 plus earmarked reserves of £12,307.00, produced an annual Precept figure for 2024/2025 of £94,387.00. This represented an increase of £4,632.00 (5.2%) on 2023/2024. The proposed Precept figure for 2024/2025 of £94,387.00 has now been put out to Public Consultation via the Parish Council website and main notice board.

Monthly Financial Report

A budget appraisal and report/reconciliation from the computerised accounts detailing account balances, cheques/transactions issued/authorised and cheques received and any outstanding receipts was considered and signed off by the Chairman.