

Minutes of **OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL** meeting
Held virtually on **Tuesday 2nd March 2021** at **7.30PM**

Councillors Present:

Cllr S Rickett (Chairman)
Cllr P Bailey
Cllr C Dyer
Cllr B Jones
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr R Taylor
Cllr C Unter

Also in attendance

L Mackie (Clerk)
County Councillor S Hohler (left at 7.40pm)
PCSO Sears (left at 7.50)
3 members of public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Borough Councillors A Kemp and P Montague

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Dyer declared an interest in planning application **TM/21/00177/FL - Barn South Of Godwell Farm**, as she is a neighbour.

3. MINUTES

The minutes arising from 2nd February 2021 were agreed by all Councillors and will be signed as approved by Cllr Rickett at the next available opportunity.

4. EXTERNAL REPORTS

a) County Councillor Hohler

- o Cllr Hohler attended the Landfill Liaison Meeting
- o Monitoring is taking place at 3 Offham properties to check the vibrations from Blaise Farm Quarry blasts
- o Residents should be on the lookout following the recent theft at Spadework and other incidents locally
- o The traffic flow across the channel is stable and presents no threat to the road network. There are about 4,000 vehicles in and 4,000 vehicles out of the country per day which is usual for this time of year. The systems are in place and working well. Vehicles are getting the right documentation ready and are Covid tested before they cross into Kent so there are no delays on our motorway network. 13 HGVs were clamped for parking illegally at the weekend, much less than previous figures. 1277 have been clamped since 11 January, nearly all being overseas vehicles. 13 people are in the isolation unit following tests
- o The May elections are going ahead
- o There was a discussion about current Tonbridge & Malling Covid Figures. Covid deaths are reducing. 82% of deaths were among the older categories who have now been vaccinated.

b) Borough Councillors

There were no reports.

c) Police

Cllr Rickett explained the anxiety and concern among residents following the recent increase in thefts in the village and local area. PCSO Sears said that calls are being monitored and an Operation is in

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place where undercover PCs are patrolling the area. PCSO Sears has padlocks, sensor alarms and smart water to mark tools available for any resident who would like them. She is patrolling Offham, as is the Crime Prevention Officer, Community Wardens and other police to provide a presence in the area – sometimes on foot, sometimes in marked cars or in unmarked cars. Residents are reminded to lock sheds and garages as soon as they leave them rather than waiting until later. Any suspicious activity should be reported to the police using 101 or 999 if the theft is in progress. There is an Operation in place covering the theft of catalytic converters as well. She will provide more information to the Parish Council about the investigation into the theft from Spadework.

5. PLANNING

a) New applications

There were no new applications

b) Approvals

- i. **TM/19/2396/R4- Blaise Farm Quarry (AD)** - Details of a maintenance manual for the proposed sustainable drainage scheme pursuant to Condition 4 of planning permission TM/19/2396.

c) Refusals

There were no refusals to report.

d) Any other planning matters

- i. **TM/21/00287/FL – Packhouse, Aldon Manor, Aldon Lane** - Relocation of planning consented conversion and change of use of Atcost Frame Barn Ref No: TM/20/00678/FL. The Parish Council has responded with objections. The revised plans show the orientation to be on less than half of the site of the original barn so over half of the proposed building is on Green Belt land.
- ii. **TM/20/02909/FL - Packhouse, Aldon Manor, Aldon Lane** -Relocation of planning consented conversion and change of use of atcost frame barn ref no: TM/20/00678/FL. WITHDRAWN
- iii. **TM/21/00177/FL - Barn South Of Godwell Farm, Church Road** - Demolition of existing redundant outbuildings and erection of a new 3 bed/6 person single storey dwelling together with a 1 bed/2 person family annex, garage accommodation and associated landscape works. Cllr Dyer left the virtual meeting while this application was being discussed. The Parish Council submitted a response to this application following which the architect has addressed those issues. It was AGREED by the Parish Council that their previous objections had been satisfactorily dealt with by this response. However, there needs to be suitable tree/hedge planting scheme around the perimeter and there remains concern about the removal of hedging and an old perimeter wall. Godwell Oast is one of the original manor houses of Offham, as is Church Farm, and the visibility needs to be protected.

6. MATTERS ARISING

a) Offham Solar Park Proposal

Cllrs Rickett and Jones attended a Landfill Liaison meeting and the solar park was included in the discussions. FCC Environment who ran the meeting own the land, but their position was that the application was nothing to do with them but with Infinis. The Parish Council has submitted details of its concerns to Arcus Consultancy who are acting for Infinis.

There was a discussion about how to proceed. The Parish Council could apply for the reinstatement of the footpath now and for the land to be returned to agricultural use or become a Country Park. There is information from Defra about environmental management, carbon capture, countryside stewardship etc, which could make a better option for the land and is also good for the environment.

The Offham Society will get the Ramblers Association involved.

The Parish Council can take this up with FCC Environment as the landowner. Infinis have the lease for electricity generation.

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- b) To consider ownership of Village Hall and Village Hall Car Park
The Parish Council have been asked to look into this by the Committee. There are a number of documents in the Village Hall which are difficult to access at the moment. The land is unregistered but it is understood to be owned by the Parish Council. Part of the car park is registered land. The Parish Council has a lot of actions underway and cannot work on this straight away, but hope to be able to begin the process of looking at documents in a few months' time.
- c) Census 21st March 2021
It is a legal requirement to complete the Census. The Parish Council has circulated this information.
- d) Remote meetings, APM and APCM
It will be necessary to hold the APM and APCM remotely due to the dates on which they take place.
- e) To consider possible return to face to face meetings after 6th May 2021
Regulations allow for remote meetings to take place until 6th May. If they are not extended then after that date face to face meetings will resume. Consideration is being given about how to achieve this safely so we fully understand all the implications. Everyone must be happy to meet face to face and if not we should provide some remote access facility. We hope for more guidance from NALC and KALC.
- f) KCC - Highways Improvement Plan
This is an ongoing item. Cllrs should submit any thoughts or ideas to Cllrs Rickett or Unter.
- g) JPCTCG Membership and Representatives (15.04.21)
Cllrs agreed to renew membership at £30pa. Cllr Unter will continue as the Parish Council representative, along with David Stretton. A third Councillor is able to take part.
- h) Review Delegated Authority to Clerk
The Delegated Authority given to the Clerk on 23rd March 2020 was considered, reviewed and approved to continue without amendment.
- i) Annual review: Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Bye-Laws, Media Policy, Complaints Procedure, Freedom of Information Act, Retention of Documents and Records Policy
The policies were considered and approved without amendment.

7. PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS

- a) Blaise Farm
 - (i) Quarry
Independent monitoring has taken place in the village. It was noted that at least one of the blasts being monitored was very weak. It was reported that skylarks are on the field where the quarry will be moving to.
 - (ii) IVC Waste Management
There was nothing to report.
 - (iii) AD Plant
There continues to be problems with odour from the site, although they said at Christmas it would take 6-8 weeks to resolve. Cllr Rickett will speak to the plant manager.
- b) Offham Landfill Site (26.02.21)
There will be a site walk when restrictions allow which should take place at the end of May. It was reported there have been no underground fires on site for over 5 years. Gas extraction was at 97%. They had to achieve at least 95% but they are hoping for 100%. The Site Manager reported there had been gas migration, and indicated it was in the area of Aldon Lane, but did not give details. He

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stated that the design of the site was so that there would be a natural migration of gas, but Cllrs disagreed with this. The idea was for gas to be contained and that was the whole point of the extraction system. The site manager also said the site would make a lovely Country Park. FCC are working towards a definitive closure within two years. They said White Ladies had not been demolished as it needed surveys for endangered species. There has been a small degree of surface reconfiguration as some areas have slumped down due to the decay of underlying materials. The Manager said it will take 6 -12 months to sort the perimeter fencing out which has fallen down in places as it would take that long to deal with the three quotes needed. However, the Manager also expressed concern for people entering the site when they shouldn't, saying there were trip hazards. The Parish Council will ask specific questions which it requires direct answers to, as these were not given at the meeting. A further meeting at the end of March has been requested. The Parish Council will chair the meeting and prepare an Agenda to ensure it is properly structured and managed.

c) To receive reports about

(i) Offham Community Network

Cllr Dyer reported that the OCN remains relatively quiet, with around 30 clients consistently. There has been a great deal of sadness at losing so many friends recently. Angela Unter had the idea of making cakes to help raise spirits, and has a team baking, who now supply 73 cakes a week. Angela was thanked for her hard work.

Angela Unter and Janette Burnard are also running the collection point for the food bank. The box is always full on collection day and the village is very responsive to requested items.

Breakfast packs were also made up for children in half term.

The OCN, Offham Society and Parish Council can work together as lockdown eases to arrange a celebration.

(ii) Offham Village Hall

Cllr Taylor reported that Tunbridge Wells Roofing are now on site and work has started. It should be finished at Easter, depending on the weather.

8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST

a) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footway problems

Residents have reported barbed wire near a footpath from the woods. Councillors have inspected the area. It is believed that barbed wire is on private property. This will be passed to the Kent County Council Public Rights of Way team to investigate.

b) To consider General Data Protection Regulations and receive updates

There is nothing to report.

c) Website

There is nothing to report.

d) To receive reports about

(i) Maintenance contract

Cllr Marchant completed the last cut in November, and instead of a second Winter cut rolled the grass. He hopes the first cut will take place this month when it is dry. There has not been a lot of growth over the winter.

(ii) The Pond, Village Green, The Pound, Cosgrave Field, Recreation Ground and Play Area, The Book Box and Defibrillator

Pond – A working party is needed.

Village Green – Cllr Rickett will contact Gallagher about supplying and delivering boulders.

The Pound – There is nothing to report

Cosgrave Field – Cllrs Marchant and Unter have met to discuss the trees. Cllrs want to ensure that any work is done that is needed to make the trees safe. Cllr Marchant said he

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would remove any dead wood or broken branches. It was noted that the Parish Council had agreed about a year ago to remove two branches and raise the crown of the tree that overhangs the tennis club. It was agreed that this should be carried out. Cllr Unter expressed a safety concern about an Ash tree which appears to be suffering from Ash die back and thought that it should be felled. Cllr Marchant said that in his professional opinion neither this tree nor any others in Cosgrave Field posed any danger apart from removal of some deadwood that he would attend to. The safety of all of the trees will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and if any further remedial work becomes necessary whilst the Parish Council is responsible for Cosgrave Field then appropriate action will be taken

Recreation Ground and Play Area- Cllrs Taylor and Jones carried out their regular inspection yesterday. When the hedges were cut it has revealed a gap, and Cllrs approved the purchase of 3 laurels to join up with the others. Cllr Taylor will order and plant these. The cost should be in the region of £25.

Book Box – There is nothing further to report.

Defibrillator – Cllr Dyer said that recent events highlighted the importance of people knowing how to use the defibrillator. Although planning a training session is difficult at the moment she will arrange one as soon as is practical.

(iii) Trees

There is nothing further to report.

(iv) Any other matters relating to Parish Land and property

A resident has raised the issue of fibre broadband. At the moment there is fibre to the box by Spadework and from there the broadband is by copper wire. There are schemes to extend the fibre to properties and businesses and there are grants available. Cllr Rickett has looked into this. There will be a lot of digging to achieve this, and it will require a lot of properties to sign up to make it financially possible as the cost is massive. If enough residents sign up then potentially the whole village could get high speed broadband for little cost. However, this is a massive project for someone to take on, which will be very time consuming. This will be on the next Agenda to allow Cllrs time consider this.

There was a discussion about why it is necessary to chase TMBC to empty litter bins in the village. TMBC have said that issues due to Covid 19, including staff shortages, mean that Urbaser are prioritising household waste collections. The same applies to the Bulky Refuse Lorry.

(v) Speed Indicator Devices

Cllr Rickett will chase a response from Kent Highways.

9. EVENTS

a) 2021 Fund Raising

This will be reviewed but it is not possible to make plans under the current circumstances.

b) Offham May Day

It will not be possible to run the event this year. The May Day Committee are keen to be involved in a village celebration when we are allowed to do so.

c) Great British Spring Clean 28 May – 13 June 2021

Cllrs do not want to wait until this event and were keen to create a day for residents to get involved in. A request for volunteers will be made and the event can be co-ordinated with the Offham Society.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Signed

Date

Minutes of Offham Parish Council Meeting Cont'd

- a) To receive bank statements, consider and approve financial statements (to be physically signed at the next available opportunity)

These have been circulated and considered by Cllrs. The statements were approved and will be signed at the next available opportunity.

- b) To consider and approve invoice payments

The following invoices were approved for payment and the payments will be authorised by Cllrs Rickett and Jones:

Payee	Description	Amount
Clerk	February 2021 Salary, expenses, allowance	£687.48
HMRC	January 2021 PAYE + NI	£160.16
Offham Lunch Club	Annual Donation	£100.00
First West Malling Scouts	Annual Donation	£100.00
Offham PCC	Annual Donation	£100.00
David Frankling	Reimbursement costs – defibrillator	£138.00
Christmas Direct	Christmas Tree Lights	£503.98

- c) To approve appointment of internal auditor

It was agreed that last year's internal auditor would be re-appointed.

- d) To receive update on change of signatories on Bank Account

The forms have been completed to remove Wendy Williams as a signatory and add Cllr Bailey.

- e) To consider any other financial matters

There were no further matters.

11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Meeting concluded at 9.50pm. Date of the next Parish Council meeting: **Tuesday 6th April 2021** at 7.30pm

Signed

Date