

Minutes of **OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL** meeting  
Held virtually on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021** at **7.30PM**

**Councillors Present:**

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

**Also in attendance**

County Councillor S Hohler (7 – 7.35pm)  
L Mackie (Clerk)  
2 members of public

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Cllr P Bailey (illness), Borough Councillors A Kemp and P Montague and PCSO Sears.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Rickett declared an interest in planning application **KCC/TM/0090/2021 – Land at Offham Landfill Site**. His property neighbours the site. He has contacted TMBC for advice. It was agreed he would discuss the application and provide a list of pros and cons but would not take part in the decision about the Parish Council's response.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes arising from 6<sup>th</sup> April 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 There was not a report, and work at KCC is shutting down in the run up to the elections.
- o She will listen to the discussions about the Solar Park application but will not take part or give a view so as not to prejudice her taking part when the application is considered by KCC.

b) Borough Councillors

There were no reports.

c) Police

There were no reports.

**5. PLANNING**

a) New applications

**i. KCC/TM/0090/2021 – Land at Offham Landfill Site** – installation of ground mounted solar PV array and associated infrastructure

There was a discussion about the pros and cons of the application from the extensive documentation submitted to KCC. Cllrs were mindful of the green credentials of the site, but were concerned to protect the village of Offham and its residents. There are differing opinions from residents from informal discussions, with some residents in favour and some against, but it is not clear in what proportion. The Parish Council has circulated details of this application to residents through the newsletter and by email, and it is advertised as an Agenda item on Notice Boards and the website. The Offham Society has circulated details to its members and is discussing the application. The Parish Council heard representations from the two members of public attending the meeting.

The main concerns which must be addressed are:

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- The application states there is no footpath across the site, but there clearly is. The application states there is only a permissive footpath, which means the landowner has chosen to permit the public to use it. However, this is a designated public footpath, recognised by KCC Public Rights of Way as MR259 which is included on the KCC Public Rights of Way Map. This Public Right of Way required a footpath diversion order in order to be moved to accommodate the landfill site.
- The sheer size of the development is huge in relation to Offham and is almost as large as the village envelope.
- There was an agreement that when the landfill site was filled and reinstatement works completed, it would be opened up as publicly accessible site. This application would defer the restoration plan for the site for at least another 35 years. The site has an agricultural use for which the village has been waiting for decades. The land could be put to better use environmentally with a huge biodiversity gain.
- A lot of the site has been landscaped and planted with hedgerows, grassland and trees. Some of these areas will need to be removed for the installation of the solar panels, which will disturb the existing habitat which has been allowed to thrive undisturbed.
- The application says there is no requirement for additional planting, but there is a potential need to fill in the gaps they have identified and to consider the need for suitable screening – for example, deciduous trees will not be as effective in Winter months.
- The applicant states that no ecological measures are to be incorporated, but the natural habitat of many animals will be disturbed by the installation of the solar panels. There was surprise that KCC did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment when bats, skylarks and newts have been identified on the site, and trees, hedgerows and grassland will be removed over an extremely large area.
- The site is within the green belt
- The development is on relatively high ground in relation to a lot of the residential land in the area. This will make the solar park more conspicuous than if it was on a level site and will be more visible than the application suggests. The panels are up to 3 metres in height, so will potentially stand out over the existing hedgerows. The photos submitted with the application are strategically taken and do not make clear the layout of the site or its visibility from parts of Offham such as Comp Lane or Hayes Lane and the residential properties there.
- There is an acknowledgement by the applicant that glint and glare can arise, but they are relying on deciduous screening to mitigate this. The question arises, what will the mitigation be during winter?
- The land is subject to subsidence, and in meetings with representatives of FCC recently they have admitted moving soil around to level the site where it has subsided
- During winter, water will run off the solar panels and may increase the risk of subsidence.
- The application states the site is not contaminated but this is not correct. As a landfill site it is clearly contaminated.

Covid-19 restrictions mean that a public meeting cannot be held, and regulations do not allow virtual meetings after 6<sup>th</sup> May. The Parish Council meeting today is the opportunity for residents to make their view known to Councillors. Councillors want to make sure residents are engaged and aware of the application and the concerns which the Parish Council has. A further email will be circulated with the Parish Council's response to the planning application and encouraging residents to read the documents submitted, particularly the Design and Access Statement, and the response from Arcus to the questions raised by the Parish Council. Cllrs acknowledged that many residents may be in favour of the application, but the priority is to protect the environment and the community.

Cllrs agreed to **OBJECT** to the application based on the concerns raised.

Cllrs Unter and Jones will be attending a meeting with Arcus Consultancy on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

- b) **TM/21/01080/TNCA - The Old Forge, Teston Road** - Diseased Cherry tree in the front garden to be removed and replaced with a new one  
Cllrs have no objections to the removal of the tree but want to be certain it is replaced with a new one.

c) Approvals

- i. **KCC/TM/0259/2020 - In Vessel Composting Facility, Blaise Farm Quarry**- Section 73 application to enable the operation of the established in vessel composting facility to its approved capacity for the same duration as the adjacent anaerobic digestion facility permitted under planning permission TM/19/2396 on 15 October 2020
- i. **TM/20/02784/WAS - Blaise Farm Quarry** - Section 73 application to enable the operation of the established in vessel composting facility to its approved capacity for the same duration as the adjacent anaerobic digestion facility permitted under planning permission TM/19/2396. KCC reference: KCC/TM/0259/2020. See above.

d) Refusals

There were no refusals to report.

e) Any other planning matters

- i. **TM/21/00898/FL - Luna Barn, 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. NO OBJECTIONS

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a) To consider delegation arrangements and confirm delegated powers to the Clerk: Delegation of Emergency Powers To The Clerk Due To Coronavirus in consultation with at least two Councillors, such delegation to enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities to residents  
Cllrs unanimously AGREED and confirmed delegated powers to the Clerk due to Coronavirus in consultation with at least two Councillors, to enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities to residents.
- b) Offham Solar Park Proposal  
This has been discussed earlier in the meeting.
- c) Annual Risk Assessment Review  
Cllrs considered the Annual Risk Assessment Review Document and approved it.
- d) To consider return to face to face meetings and approve cancellation of monthly Parish Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021  
Virtual meetings cannot take place after 6<sup>th</sup> May, but it will not be possible to hold public in person meetings until 21<sup>st</sup> June due to Covid-19 restrictions. It was agreed to cancel the June meeting, and the Parish Council will next meet in the Village Hall on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021.
- e) To consider proposed lease of Cosgrave Field by Offham Cricket Club and agree actions  
The Parish Council is incurring solicitors' fees to understand the position, whilst not making any progress. The Parish Council has not got access to the records held in the Village Hall yet. The response from the cricket club has not been positive. The Parish Council has a great deal of work underway at the moment, and there is an upcoming change in members. Councillors discussed the issue and agreed to notify the Cricket Club that for various reasons OPC is unable to give the question of a lease of Cosgrave Field any consideration at the moment. In due course when the Parish Council has the time it will consider the papers and whether to progress the matter.
- f) To consider request for new water main from Teston Road to Hayes Cottages  
The owner of a property in Hayes Lane wants to improve the water supply, but part of the route will run across the Village Green. Cllrs want to see a detailed plan of the proposed route, and to know if a trench will be dug or if the contractor will use a mole. If the work is to take place using the shortest route across the grass opposite the pub, then there is a mature cherry tree in the way, and a trench would potentially damage the tree roots. It was suggested that the Village Green could be avoided in its entirety if the work took place along Hayes Lane to Teston Road.
- g) To consider 20mph speed limit  
Cllrs are keen to pursue this and Cllr Trudy Dean has provided useful information. However, this will be a big project and will need a Councillor or resident to lead it. The Parish Council is not

able to take this on at the moment, but will consider and add it to the Highway Improvement Plan when time permits.

**7. OPEN FORUM - Public Participation Session**

Mike Rowe addressed the meeting and expressed gratitude to the Councillors for all they do on behalf of the Offham Society and wished all the best for those Councillors standing down.

**8. PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

a) Blaise Farm (BJ)

(i) Liaison Meetings (07.09.21)  
There was no further report.

(ii) Quarry  
The interim footpath diversion is now well advanced/finished. Cllr Rickett has asked Gallagher if there would be any planting of trees or bund construction along the edge which would interrupt views and what their plans were about the timing of breaking through to the new field. He will report back to Cllrs when he has the response.

(iii) IVC Waste Management  
There was no further report.

(iv) AD Plant  
Cllr Rickett is waiting for a response from Darren Smith of BioConstruct New Energy. They are using the right ingredients now, but they are still having problems with emissions and gases. They have experts from Germany to investigate.

b) Offham Landfill Site (BJ)

FCC Environment have been provided with a list of questions, and a response is still awaited.

c) To receive reports about

(i) Offham Community Network (CU)

Cllr Dyer reported that the OCN is looking to change its format moving forwards, developing groups that are self-supporting, and away from the framework that the Church provides with safeguarding and insurance.

There was a discussion about whether the Parish Council would front a planned post covid celebration, to enable the event to be covered by insurance. If the Parish Council took this on, it would need to be risk assessed and there would need to be a Cllr involved on the organising committee. The Parish Council would need to be seen as the Chief organisers. It was acknowledged there is a lot of formality and requirements in order for an event to be covered by Parish Council insurance. The situation has changed a lot from Village Events in the past, such as the millennium celebrations. It was suggested that May Day, which has been set up as a company, could obtain one day insurance for a small event. Cllr Dyer said that the idea is for organisations in the village to work together and plan the event and ideas are being made already. Cllr Unter will discuss with Cllr Dyer how the Parish Council can help.

(ii) Offham Village Hall (RT)

Cllr Taylor reported that the Village Hall Committee have worked very hard under a lot of pressure, and the roof is completed but there remain problems with the interior which are being addressed with the contractor. The Village Hall is opening up to clubs and groups to use.

**9. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST**

a) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footway problems

There is nothing to report.

b) To consider Data Protection Regulations and receive updates and to complete a review of the Privacy Notice

There were no GDPR updates. The Privacy Notice was reviewed and it was noted the website address, email address and Clerk's phone number have been updated. The Notice was approved.

c) To receive reports about

(i) KCC Highways Improvement Plan (CU)

The suggested 20mph zone would form part of the Highways Improvement Plan and can be talked about at a future date.

The white/yellow lines outside the school need repainting and this can be reported to Highways via the online portal.

(ii) Maintenance contract

Cllr Marchant has cut the grass and will send a checklist confirming work completed. A resident has reported overgrown vegetation at the junction with Aldon Lane and Teston Road and Cllr Marchant will trim the area.

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

*Pond* – Ongoing maintenance will be planned. **(SR)**

*Village Green* – The rocks will be moved into position shortly **(SR, AM)**

Cllr Taylor organised a cleaning party, and Cllrs Unter and Jones took part, along with Simon, and Ken. Cllr Rickett also cleaned the gateway on the Green. Rachel and David and Rob and Sarah were thanked for providing lots of buckets of hot soapy water. The volunteers cleaned signs, the map, the quintain, the gateways, the bus shelter, the Notice Board and many other things. They look really good, and the volunteers were thanked for their hard work. **(RT)**

*The Pound* – There is nothing to report.

*Cosgrave Field* – This has already been discussed.

*Recreation Ground and Play Area*- Cllrs Taylor and Jones are completing the regular inspections. **(BJ, RT)**

*Book Box* – There is nothing further to report.

*Defibrillator* – Cllr Rickett will check if the light on the defibrillator is still flashing.

(iv) Trees

Clare Innes agreed to speak to the school about cutting back trees around the Wellingtonia.

(v) Speed Indicator Devices (PB)

Cllr Bailey has agreed to take over the SID. Kent Highways have replied and initially approved a location for a new SID on Church Road near the school. Cllrs agreed that Cllr Rickett should ask them to carry out an underground survey and provide a cost for providing and installing the SID.

**10. EVENTS**

a) Post Covid Village Event

This has already been discussed.

**11. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

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 Unter and Jones:

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
	<b>Payments for April 2021</b>	
Surrey Hills Solicitors	Legal Fees	£300.00

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Clerk	April 2021 Salary, expenses, allowance	£687.48
HMRC	April 2021 PAYE + NI	£159.27
Offham PCC	Annual Donation Churchyard Gardening	£1,000.00
Offham Village Hall Committee	Annual Donation	£1,000.00
Clerk	Reimbursement – Parish Mobile Phone	£69.99
KALC	AGAR Training	£21.00

- c) To review Internet Banking  
 Cllrs reviewed the Internet Banking with Unity Trust and were pleased with the service. No changes were required.
- d) Report from Clerk – KALC Training on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (14.04.21)  
 The Clerk has circulated details from the Training Course.
- e) To approve the Supporting Statement and Fixed Asset Register  
 The Council considered and approved the Supporting Statement and Fixed Asset Register for the year ending 31 March 2021. The Chairman and Clerk will sign the Statement on behalf of the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- f) To review the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control.  
 The Council considered and approved the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31 March 2021. The Chairman and Clerk will sign the Statement on behalf of the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- g) To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21, Section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2021.  
 The Council considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21. The Chairman and Clerk will sign and date the Statement on behalf of the Council at the earliest opportunity. The Clerk confirmed that the Transparency Code requirements have been kept up to date and posted to the Council's website.
- h) To approve the Accounting Statements for 2020-21, Section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2021 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2021 and if necessary, the explanation of the significant variations from last year (2019-20) to this year (2020-21)  
 The Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements and supporting documents as provided by the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer who had prior to the meeting signed and dated Section 2 of the AGAR for 2020-21. The Chairman will sign and date the Accounting Statement on behalf of the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- i) To confirm that the Council meets the criteria for exemption for 2020-21 and can certify itself as exempt from the "limited assurance review".  
 The Council considered itself "exempt" from the limited assurance review. The Chairman and Clerk/RFO will sign and date the Certificate of Exemption on behalf of the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- j) To note publication of Local Authority Accounts: A Summary of Your Rights and Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return  
 The Clerk will publish the Notices and Unaudited Return in the appropriate timescales.
- k) To note Annual Internal Audit Report Booked 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
 It has not been possible for the Internal Audit to take place before the AGAR is considered by the Parish Council at this meeting due to the availability of the Internal Auditor. The Internal Audit will take place on 18<sup>th</sup> May and will be reported at the following meeting.

- l) To consider any other financial matters  
There were no other matters.

**11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

Cllr Rickett announced that with regret he would be resigning from the Parish Council following the meeting and Annual Parish Council meeting. Cllr Dyer also announced that she was sorry to also be resigning.

The Meeting concluded at 9.00pm. Date of the monthly Parish Council meeting: **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021** at 7.30pm

Signed .....

Dated .....