

MINUTES of OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL meeting
Held on Tuesday 17th January 2023 at 7.30PM in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

Councillors Present:

Cllr C Unter (Chairman)
Cllr J Barnes
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr M Scullion
Cllr C Stephens
Cllr S Williams

Also in attendance:

County Councillor Hohler
2 members of public
L Mackie (Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** To receive apologies for absence and declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest.
There were apologies from Cllr Bailey, Borough Councillors Kemp and Montague. There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. **MINUTES**

- a) To receive and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2022 for signature
It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of 6th December be approved and signed as an accurate record.

3. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**

- a) County Councillor Hohler
Cllr Hohler reported that KCC have been struggling with the budget. A public consultation has been launched which is going on until March. There are events where residents can discuss the budget at Larkfield Library on 8th February and Tonbridge on 4th February.
- b) Borough Councillors Kemp and Montague
Cllr Montague has reported that TMBC are trying to ensure the owners of the ancient woodland at top of Seven Mile Lane at the corner of the A20 will be forced to replant the woodland where they have removed a large number of trees. Tom Tugendhat is involved with the site on Seven Mile Lane by the A20 which has been left in an appalling mess.
- c) Police
Mark Stubberfield the new District Commander described what will happen around the country – the number of PCSOs will reduce and the number of Police Constables will increase, but nobody knows what the numbers will be or what the support will be for parishes. It was made clear to him and the PCC that Parishes are keen to see police at their meetings.

4. **PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:**

- a) Blaise Farm
- i. Liaison Meeting (22.03.23)
There is nothing to report.
 - ii. Quarry
There was nothing to report.
 - iii. IVC Waste Management
There was nothing to report.
 - iv. AD Plant
There was nothing to report.

b) Offham Landfill Site

There was a site meeting on 7th December which Cllr Unter attended. The visit included the boundary along the main road by the Public Rights of Way diversion, discussing White Ladies and looking at the Power Station at the back which had been making noise. They had already carried out some maintenance and replaced some parts on the Power Station. Michael Ross, the Site Manager, is very interested in making sure he is available for queries or problems and to make sure we understand what is happening. He is not involved with the company putting in the solar park.

c) Offham Village Hall

Cllr Williams attended. She reported that:

- Their next big project is to resurface the car park
- There is no demand in West Malling or Offham for a Warm space. If demand arises they are prepared to offer the Village Hall again. Rev'd David Green has let the Committee know there is no need at the moment
- The Committee is not planning an event for The Coronation
- They are planning a spring bazaar in the Hall
- There is no update regarding the ownership of the Hall. The papers are with the Land Registry.

5. **PLANNING**

a) New applications

- i. **TM/22/02873/FL - Kingscot , Tower Hill** - Demolition of existing single storey side extension and replacement two storey side extension. Refurbishment, conservation and repair works to listed property including replacement of asbestos garage roof, new driveway gate and associated landscaping. Demolition of existing shed and replacement single storey detached annexe

Cllrs heard representations from two residents at the meeting:

- The neighbour has concerns about being overlooked by the extension which is very close to their property – 15m, instead of 21m.
- The overall effect on the street scene of the extension is detrimental for Tower Hill and the Offham Conservation Area Kingscot is a wonderful house , dating back to the 16th century and is one of the oldest houses in Offham. You see the house as you walk down Tower Hill and the countryside opening around it. Under these proposals, the first thing you would see as you walk down Tower Hill is the 2 storey extension rather than the house itself.
- It is out of keeping with the other houses around it, being made of glass, aluminium and black weatherboarding. Teston Cottage and Offham house and barn are 400 years old. Tower Hill Cottage dates back to the 18th century.
- The extension will obstruct the view of the house which is one of most historic in Offham and of the greenery beyond it.
- The extension will double the width of the existing dwelling
- The extension totally changes the street scene.
- The extension will look bigger than the original house as Kingscot has a narrow pitch and the extension does not.
- The application says it will make the property more in keeping with modern living. But for 400 years people have lived there. If someone wants somewhere that is suitable for modern living, they should not harm the character of an ancient house to achieve that.
- In a Conservation Area, any building should enhance that area. This proposal does not do that.
- Listed Buildings are supposed to protect their history and the story of the house. This application would knock down the one storey extensions next to the property that were built in the 1950s and 1960s before it was listed. The one storey extension is significant, has a lovely garden room, and is a key part of the houses' history. The property became Grade 2 listed with the extension.
- The boundary of the Conservation Area is just beyond Kingscot. The proposed annexe is not in the Conservation Area.

There was understanding that new work should look different from the original to identify it, but it was felt the plans were out of keeping. Cllrs and residents were pleased that a new family has moved in and want to work on the house.

- There is a connecting glass bridge to separate the old property and the new, where neighbours can see movement.
- The proposal is for two big solid wooden electric gates, which look more appropriate to a suburban area than a rural one. Offham village is fairly open, with no boarded up gates on Tower Hill to block views. This will contribute to the general closing down of the countryside view.
- There were concerns about the shed at the bottom of the property which is large and to be replaced with a building on the same footprint at least as Kingscot. There will be easy access to a gate on the main road. The Parish Council objects to any back garden development taking place.
- The application refers to an annexe, but it includes a bathroom, study and bedroom. There are concerns that this may be regarded as a separate dwelling at some point in the future. It was understood that this building has never been used as a dwelling, but was used as a playroom and storage, being built on pig sties.

The Parish Council will ask for this application to be called to Committee. The Parish Council **OBJECTS** to the application for the reasons discussed.

- ii. **TM/22/02874/LB - Kingscot, Tower Hill** - Listed Building Application: Demolition of existing single storey side extension and replacement two storey side extension. Internal alterations, refurbishment, conservation and repair works to listed building. Replacement of asbestos garage roof, new driveway gate and associated landscaping. Demolition of existing shed and replacement single storey detached annexe

- iii. **TM/22/02842/FL - Cold Store East Of The Applehouse, Aldon Lane** - Demolition of existing cold stores and erection of a two storey, two bedroom dwelling, office/store and garage

The map on the TMBC website and diagram show shape of the building that has been given approval at TM/22/00477. Both are identical because it is the same building. It appears that as soon as approval for one plan has been gained, another application has been sought. Cllrs will consider further before replying to TMBC but there were concerns about this application in Green Belt and in a Conservation Area.

Approvals

- i. **TM/22/00477/FL - Cold Store East Of The Applehouse, Aldon Lane** - Change of use of redundant cold store into 1no. dwellinghouse
- ii. **TM/22/02202/LB - Orchard Place Cottage, Comp Lane** - Listed Building Application: Repairs to timber frame, replacement of cement render with lime render, replacement of windows, improvement of thermal properties by the introduction of vapour permeable insulation, rewire and provision of electric heating, provision of wood burning stoves, roof recovering, replacement of concrete and suspended timber floor with limecrete floor, provision of a first floor shower room and repairs to lime plaster and wattle and daub

b) Refusals

There were no refusals to report.

c) Any other planning matters

- i. **TM/22/02601/FL - Spadework Ltd, Teston Road** - Retrospective approval for amendments to planning consent TM/17/03240/FL including a single storey office extension to east elevation, freestanding modular toilets, omission of enclosure to covered walkways, new open canopy to south elevation, and relocation of two parking bays (NO OBJECTIONS)

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) To appoint Vice Chairman

Cllr Marchant said that he is not able to stand for Vice Chairman, but offered to help on occasion. Cllr Unter will prepare a list of what he would like a Vice- Chair to do, including attending meetings.

- b) To consider Offham Society Request to Use Cosgrave Field 16.07.23
This is a very popular event and Cllrs were pleased to agree to the Offham Society using Cosgrave Field. Cllr Unter will carry out a risk assessment of the area beforehand.
- c) KALC and Offham Community Award
Some nominations have been received already, which the Clerk will circulate. Cllrs will make a decision at the next meeting.
- d) To approve terms of reference for Highways Working Group
Cllr Barnes will circulate a draft Terms of Reference for Cllrs to consider. He is looking for 3 Cllrs and 2 villagers to take part for a year to cover Speedwatch, highways improvements and anything relating to traffic. The Parish Council lacks the time and resource, so want people who will get involved and do the work. The reality is, even if a 20ph limit is achieved, it won't slow vehicles down, So we need to look at things like Speedwatch that will slow people down - practical solutions to get people engaged. Speedwatch needs someone to run it, liaise, sort the equipment, find the people, sort the rota etc. This can sit outside of the Parish Council. Cllrs are already stretched with other projects.
- e) To discuss condition of Hayes Lane
A complaint has been made by a resident, who does not live in Hayes Lane about the Refuse Lorry not being able to access the road to collect food waste. The resident complained that the Parish Council had not done anything about this. Cllrs noted that they did not know the refuse lorry could not access Hayes Lane. The resident has since met with TMBC who have agreed a plan. The access problems were because of works by SGN to replace the gas governor. Works are due to be completed next week then the area will be put back to the condition it was in. The resident also complained about potholes along Hayes Lane. It was noted that this road is unadopted, so KCC Highways will not repair the potholes. It is essentially privately owned and it is the responsibility of the residents to arrange repairs. Cllrs agreed that parish funds could not be spent on private land. Action cannot be taken to force residents to repair their own property. This has never been a proper trackway, but holes were patched in by certain residents in the past. No complaints have been received by residents of Hayes Lane.
- f) Buses: 58 and 70
Cllr Mike Taylor, chair of Borough Green Parish Council and a Borough Councillor, has circulated details of a once a week service to be subsidised by parishes. There has been a lot of concern locally that so many bus services are being dispensed with because of savings KCC need to make. There is the opportunity to have an occasional bus service, perhaps once a week, to allow people to travel into West Malling. Whether we can do more than that depends on the operator Nu Venture. Cllr Taylor is doing a great deal of work and is applying for grants as well. Cllrs Unter and Barnes have discussed how we find out who would like to use a bus in Offham. The Oracle could circulate a questionnaire, for about £35, to homes in Offham. Cllr Barnes will design a short questionnaire. Cllr Scullion agreed that replies could be delivered to the pub. Cllr Unter will contact Cllr Taylor to clarify whether the figures he has quoted are per week, month or year, and he will also speak to Norman Kemp of Nu Venture.
- g) Gas Works on the Village Green
This has already been discussed.
- h) Defibrillator Training
It was noted that the handle has been broken on the front of the defibrillator and it is hard to see how this is not deliberate. Wendy Williams discovered the damage and David Frankling will establish if it needs replacing. Cllr Williams has spoken to Kath Frankling and they will agree dates for training.
- i) Councillor Training
Cllrs Unter, Scullion and Bailey have taken part in various training courses. The Parish Council budgets for Cllrs training, and Cllr Unter encouraged everyone to undertake some training this year.
- 6. OPEN FORUM - Public Participation Session**
There was a discussion about analysis of the Environmental Enhancement Scheme and the effect, if any, it has had on traffic in the village.

It was reported that there have been Leadership Changes at Offham Primary School, and Emily Johns is no longer the Head Teacher. There are concerns about the latest Ofsted report.

8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST

- a) GDPR Updates
There was nothing to report.
- b) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footways problems (www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem)
There was a tree across path from Pepingstraw down towards the church not far in. Cllr Marchant agreed to cut and move the tree.
In the woods, there is barbed wire on the floor at the back of Bullawayo. This has been discussed before. It was noted that the property has recently been sold and it is hoped the new owners will remove the barbed wire quickly.
- c) Reports about Parish Property and Land including The Pond, Village Green, The Pound, Cosgrave Field, Recreation Ground, Play Area, Book Box, Defibrillator, Speed Indicator Devices, Trees
There were no issues to report.
- d) To discuss play area repairs and replacement plans
Cllr Unter will meet with Cllr Bailey and Cllr Stephens will attend if he is able. Cllr Marchant can also be involved.
Repairs will need to be done while work is carried out to plan, fund and build a new play area.

9. EVENTS. To receive reports on past events and to discuss events coming soon

- a) Carols in the Pub (14.12.22)
This was not as busy as previous years, perhaps due to the cold weather.
- b) Race Night run by OPC with The Malling Lions 14.01.23
Cllr Unter wanted to thank every Cllr for the help they gave or their donations for the auction and raffle. Particular thanks were given to Cllr Scullion and Wendy Williams, who organised the whole event with Cllr Unter.
Money was raised for the play area refurbishment. On the night the raffle raised £370 and the auction £695. Ticket sales will be taken into account, money from the tote, and then the costs of the food and other items. The Malling Lions were fantastic and the Parish Council will make a donation to thank them. Cllrs Unter and Scullion will formally thank those who donated to the auction or raffle or were sponsors.
- c) TMBC Parish Partnership Panel 09.02.23
Cllr Stephens will attend with Cllr Unter.
- d) Men's Shed – The Kings Arms – Every Thursday
This continues to go well. Some Mens Shed regulars attended the Carols, who wouldn't otherwise have come.
- e) 2023 Calendar – Sales and Money
Wendy Williams sold another £60 of calendars at race night. Cllrs Scullion, Stephens and Williams have deposited £35 for their calendar sales. Cllrs Barnes and Marchant will transfer the money. There are 19 calendars left. It was agreed that Wendy Williams could donate them.
There was a discussion about the 2024 calendar. Cllr Williams agreed to run this with Cllr Stephens. Wendy Williams has done a fabulous job and sold more than half of the calendars. To sell well they should be available for May Day. Adverts for photos will go out soon.
- f) APM 2023
Cllr Unter discussed some ideas. The Clerk will find out when the Village Hall is available on Fridays in April and May, avoiding school holidays.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- a) To receive update on Parish Councillor Signatories with Unity Trust.
Cllr Barnes needs to telephone Unity Trust, and Cllr Scullion has sent his ID to the Clerk. Cllr Stephen's needs to provide information to be added as a signatory.
- b) To receive bank statements, consider and approve financial statements and to monitor budget
These have been circulated and considered by Cllrs. The statements were approved and were signed by Cllr Unter.
- c) To consider and approve invoice payments
The following invoices were approved for payment and will be authorised by Councillors Unter and Marchant.

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Payments – January 2023		
Wrotham Computer Care	Anti Virus	£21.77
SMLM Ltd	Kings Arms January– Mens Shed Donation	£50.00
Offham Village Hall Committee	Hall Hire	£76.00
Clerk	January 2023 Salary	£757.49
HMRC	January 2023 PAYE and NI	£179.02
Clerk	Expenses – December 22	£4.55

- d) To consider and approve budget 2023-2024
There was a discussion and Councillors approved a budget of £42,229 for 2023/24.

Employment Costs	£13,009
Training	£600
Clerk and Cllr Expenses	£360
Professional Fees and Admin	£2270
Hire of Hall	£300
Churchyard Gardening	£1,000
Open Spaces	£6,620
Play Area	£8,110
Insurance	£1,700
Audit	£450
Consumables	£300
Traffic Calming	£500
Parish Property	£2,000
Contingency	£2,000
Village Projects	£2,000
Annual Parish Meeting	£250
Donations	£130
Subscriptions	£630
TOTAL BUDGET	£42,229

- e) To consider and approve Precept Request 2023-2024
It was AGREED that a precept request of £25,440 be made and the balance of £16,788.35 be funded from Parish Reserves, fund raising and grants. This would mean an increase in precept of £1,921.65. The increase is needed to cover the rise in costs and materials, the repairs needed for the play area and to provide towards a sinking fund to modernise and replace existing play area equipment. The Parish Council is setting aside £5,000 each year in reserves towards the play area.

The payment per Band D property will be £62.54pa, which is an increase of £4.36 or 7.5%. The Parish Council is very active and wants to continue to carry out as much work for the improvement of the Village as it can.

f) Notification of external Auditor Appointment for Smaller Authorities: Mazars LLP
This was noted.

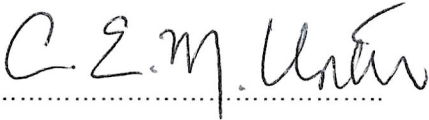
g) To consider any other financial matters
There were no other financial matters.

11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

There were no items raised.

The Meeting concluded at 9.20pm.

Date of the next Parish Council meeting: Tuesday 7th February 2023 at 7.30pm

Signed 

Dated 7/FEB/2023