

MINUTES of OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL meeting
Held on Tuesday 7th March 2023 at 7.30PM in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

Councillors Present:

Cllr C Unter (Chairman)
Cllr P Bailey
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr M Scullion (arrived at 8pm)
Cllr S Williams

Also in attendance:

County Councillor Hohler (7.30 -7.40pm)
Trudy Dean - Chairman West Malling Parish Council (7.30 – 9pm)
L Mackie (Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** To receive apologies for absence and declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest.
Apologies were received from Cllr Stephens and 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 7th February 2023 for signature
It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of 7th February be approved and signed as an accurate record.

3. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**

- a) County Councillor Hohler

Cllr Hohler reported that:

- People have asked if bus stops can be taken down where there are no buses. The bus stops must stay to show information for at least 6 months and in case the service comes back.
- Cllr Unter reported that bus stop markings were repainted by KCC on the same day the bus service was stopped. He will ask Nu Venture to include the timetable for the return journey.
- Invicta Academy is signing up Ukrainian children over 4 years old for free English lessons online, from 6th March for 4 weeks.
- She was sorry to hear about the fire in the village, and noted that the way people have donated and helped is so generous.
- She has heard people from outside the village talking enthusiastically about how good Spadework is, particularly for the food.
- She visited the Primary School last Monday and spent time with the Executive Head who is very experienced. She is arranging another meeting. There were positive signs, and children were happy. Cllr Unter met the Headteacher a couple of weeks ago, and agrees she will be very effective.

- b) Borough Councillor Montague

There was no report.

- c) Police

The police have reported there were no crime reports for Offham in February.

4. **PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:**

- a) Blaise Farm (Liaison Meeting 22.03.23)

- i. Quarry (report of blast 09.02.23)
A blast from the quarry on 9th February was quite marked and at least two residents made a complaint. The Quarry Manager will contact them to discuss.
- ii. IVC Waste Management
There was nothing to report.
- iii. AD Plant
There was nothing to report.

- b) Offham Landfill Site (to include Quarry View Cottages)
Cllr Bailey has met Michael Ross, FCC Site Business Manager, at Quarry Cottages. Michael is responsible for maintenance of the landfill site, and although helpful, is limited as to what action he can take. The Estates and Development Team are responsible for maintenance of the house they own at Quarry View Cottages which is in a complete state of disrepair. The Clerk was asked to contact the Estates and Development team for action. This could also be reported to TMBC Environmental Health.
The Clerk was asked to contact KCC to find out the situation regarding the solar park application.
- c) Offham Village Hall
There have been some problem in the last 24 hours with parking, complaints being made by parents from the Primary School. The Village Hall Committee is finding that more regularly hirers need the car park which is being used by 'school run' vehicles. Yesterday the car park was closed to allow delivery of a skip, which caused the complaints.
The Headteacher has contacted Cllr Unter and has subsequently spoken to the Chair of the Village Hall Committee. The Committee has asked the school to discourage the use of the Hall car park. The Committee is concerned there is no path between the Village Hall and the field so it is not safe for pedestrians. It does not want everyone parking there when it has been resurfaced and it is for hirers not school traffic. A field has been provided for parents to use, but a parent has complained it is too muddy.
We understand that the Headteacher is working with KCC to seek help with a crossing patrol and to install gates for security for the school.
The Village Hall AGM is being held tomorrow.
- d) Offham Primary School
Cllr Unter has met the Interim Headteacher and thinks she will do a good job for the school

5. **PLANNING**

- a) New applications
- a) **TM/23/00372/FL - Hodges Place, Church Road** - Single storey detached building, ancillary to the main dwelling to be used as a carers annex (resubmission of TM/18/00913/FL)
This application was approved by TMBC four years ago but has lapsed.
Cllrs discussed the plans. There was concern that there is a shed, which is a temporary structure, on Green Belt land. That is being replaced by a permanent habitable structure, part of which will be on the Green Belt. The Parish Council consistently objects to development on the Green Belt. Cllrs agreed this appears to be a good application, except for concerns about the position of the dwelling, which will be **OBJECTED** to. There is plenty of room on site to locate the permanent structure on land that is not in the Green Belt.
- b) Approvals
- i. **TM/22/02489/FL - Land South West Of Fre Mel Farm, Comp Lane** - Extension to existing workshop
- ii. **TM/22/02618/FL - Spadework Ltd, Teston Road** - ME19 5NA Extension of existing farm shop and office to provide enlarged farm shop, store/goods-in area and medical/trainee room
- iii. **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
- c) Refusals
There were no refusals to report.
- d) Any other planning matters
There were no other planning matters.

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a) To consider Parish Councillor Vacancy

No expressions of interest have been received in the vacancy. Cllrs were asked to consider if there is anyone suitable.

b) To consider Funding Request - Buses: 58 and 70

Trudy Dean reported a debate around the powers that Parish Councils have to provide funding for the bus service. There is conflict between what KALC say, what you can read in legislation and what the bus company are telling us.

It may be that the only power Parish Councils have is through s137 of the Local Government Act 1972 which allows Parish Councils to spend money (subject to a statutory limit) for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants. It allows Parish Councils to do things that there is no specific power to do. Nu Venture is researching the 1985 Transport Act Legislation to see if there is a specific power allowing Parish Councils to fund buses. West Malling Parish Council is asking KCC to confirm it is ok for Parish Councils to fund this bus service. It's opinion is the amount of money is small and the provision of the bus service will do a lot of good. It is important the bus service is well used and it needs constant promotion.

All Cllrs **AGREED** to support this, and the Parish Council has been asked to pay around £87 for a six month trial, which was approved.

c) To consider and approve Tree Management Policy

A draft policy has been circulated for consideration. This will be approved at the next meeting.

Cllr Marchant is concerned about the oak tree at the corner of the play area which is a beautiful old tree. He is investigating applying for a TPO.

d) Drainage – Village Green

A resident has reported that the foul water drain running away from his house under part of the Village Green has been blocked several times. He has unblocked it, and Southern Water have attended and said a camera is needed to establish the cause. The Parish Council noted that Southern Water has acknowledged they should deal and indicated they will return with a camera. The Parish Council will wait to find out the results of the camera search. Councillors doubted the Wellingtonia tree roots caused the blockage as it was able to be cleared.

e) Annual Review: Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Bye-Laws, Media Policy, Complaints Procedure, Freedom of Information Act, Retention of Documents and Records

Cllrs have received and had the opportunity to consider the existing policies and documents. They are unchanged from last year, and the Clerk did not believe any changes were needed. Cllrs **APPROVED** the documents.

f) Annual Review of Risk Assessments

The Assessments have been changed to reflect the Cllrs managing the Green, Play Area and Trees, and to remove the item referring to document storage in the Village Hall Garage. This Annual Review was **APPROVED**.

g) To consider and adopt KALC Civility and Respect Pledge

Cllrs agreed to pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge.

By signing up to the civility and respect pledge, we are demonstrating that our council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Councillors agree to the following statements:

- Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role
- Our council has committed to training councillors and staff
- Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors
- Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy
- Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise

- Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme
- Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

h) Defibrillator Training

Cllr Williams is trying to arrange a date for training.

i) Great British Spring Clean 2023 (17.03.23 - 02.04.23)

The Clerk will pass this information to Simon Mahoney to see if he will consider getting a group to take part in this event.

Comments were made about how bad debris is on Teston Road at the moment, and between Seven Mile Lane and Teston Road.

j) To discuss King's Coronation

Cllrs were not sure if there was interest in the Village celebrating the Coronation. May Day is being held the weekend before. The Parish Council ran two fund raising social events last year and doesn't want to run another large event this year. Cllr Unter will contact other Village Groups and ask if they would like to organise a tea party on the village green and perhaps liaise with the pub.

It is understood that the Village Hall Committee may be showing the Coronation on a screen, but is unlikely to run an event afterwards. The Committee was responsible for the Jubilee Street Party and carried out a lot of work for that last year. The King's Arms Pub is considering how to run an event.

6. OPEN FORUM - Public Participation Session

There were no members of public.

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)

Cllr Dean circulated a map of the 20mph scheme in West Malling which is going out for consultation this weekend. The central area not coloured is already in a 20mph zone. That has been in place for about ten years. KCC are happy with the scheme which is being sent out for consultation.

On Offham Road to the South West, they have not taken the 30mph limit as far as the Teston Junction, as West Malling Parish Council had wanted. This is something that Offham Parish Council can respond to in the consultation. If OPC want to aim for a 20mph scheme, the sensible route would be to start with 30mph at that junction.

A scheme for East Malling is also going to consultation at the same time.

Cllr Dean pays for the design and consultation for the scheme out of her County Members Grant, but that has been reduced from £10,000 to £3,500 per year. If the Parishes want to implement the scheme there will need to be contributions from the Parish Council or from s106 contributions. The 20mph scheme in West Malling does not include any heavy engineering just signs and roundels in road.

WMPC tried to get the 20mph scheme to extend further along St Leonards Street to the roundabout by the bypass. Unfortunately this was not possible as when Lancaster Gate planning was considered, no speed limits were requested. A separate application for a 20mph scheme along here will need to be made. Again, residents can respond to the current consultation about this.

WMPC were able to use data accessed by KCC from technology used by satellite systems to predict travel time between locations as evidence for the scheme.

Cllr Unter noted that KCC have put measuring strips down in Offham and we are waiting for results.

Cllr Dean reported that it has taken 6 or 7 months of negotiation with KCC to design and arrange the scheme. Some areas have a problem that people don't like a 20mph scheme on a strategic route – an important through route – unless you put in heavy engineering. That has a financial cost. West Malling did not have a strategic route through it because of the bypass.

Offham Parish Council will wait for the survey results from KCC. We need to find out if Cllr Hohler is prepared to fund the scheme. David Frankling and Steve Rickett, two former Parish Council

Chairman, have offered to work on the scheme and Cllrs were grateful for their offer of support and experience

Cllr Marchant will try and cut back vegetation from the path from Pepingstraw into the woods.

Cllr Bailey will liaise with the new owner of Bulawayo about the need to remove the barbed wire which is falling into the path.

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

Cllr Marchant reported that he is waiting for the weather to warm up to carry out the first cut of the playing field. Cllr Bailey has carried out a cut to prepare the ground for football.

The Village Green was not damaged by the fire engines on Teston Road. It was noted that a hole was dug to cut off the gas and electricity supply to the property - SGN gas and UKPN/E Power network attended. Cllrs will establish who is dealing with this from the sign on the barriers and will make sure this is repaired.

The ground has settled around the Gas Governor, but the tripping hazard has come back again. SGN said it wouldn't protrude. Cllr Unter has heard from SGN that the work has been signed off and they are looking for legal agreement with the Parish Council to access the Governor regularly. Cllr Unter will ask them to refill and flatten the ground. Cllr Marchant offered to carry out the work if SGN don't. Cllr Marchant noted that they cut through tree roots to get the gas pipe in. He will see what damage there is when the tree starts to leaf.

Cosgrave Field entrance had been barriered off. It was noted that a cattle gate was put up when the sheep were there; it has just not been taken down.

Cllr Williams has liaised with the Cricket Club. They will be asking for permission to make their shed bigger as they have lots of junior members and equipment with nowhere to store it. Cllrs agreed that details of club fixtures can be included in the Parish Council newsletter.

Cllr Bailey reported that one of the three benches in Cosgrave Field is in a poor state of repair. The fence between Cosgrave Field and the cricket ground needs attention. Cllrs Unter and Marchant will go to look at Cosgrave Field. The Clerk will check who is responsible for repairing the fence.

d) To discuss play area repairs and replacement plans

Cllrs Unter and Bailey will meet to discuss.

It was noted that the concrete step is protruding a little into the playground. Repairs to this were approved as part of the fence work that was to be completed.

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

a) TMBC Parish Partnership Panel 09.02.23

Cllr Unter attended. There was discussion about the Local Plan and about Elections.

b) Village Green Treatment 22.03.23

This was noted. Cllrs are happy with the work of the company carrying out the treatment.

c) KALC T&M 30.03.23

This is an online meeting. Cllr Unter will ask Cllr Stephens if he can attend.

d) Offham May Day 29.04.23

This was noted. The Clerk will send out a template risk assessment for the Village Green.

e) APM – 12.05.23

Topics and speakers for the APM were discussed.

- f) 2024 Photo Competition and Calendar
 Cllrs approved a landscape calendar. Cllr Williams is obtaining quotes for printing and Cllrs Unter and Williams will select photos for the calendar. Cllrs agreed to ask £40 from sponsors, and to consider a small increase in purchase price, to help cover the increased cost of printing and to raise more funds for Parish Council projects.
- g) Men's Shed – The Kings Arms – Every Thursday
 The first anniversary of the Men's Shed takes place this week. Grant applications to fund the Men's Shed will be investigated.
 Cllrs were pleased with how the village has come together to help the residents affected by the recent house fire. Cllr Scullion was congratulated for everything he has done and for setting up fund raising which has been so well supported by the village.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- a) To receive update on Parish Councillor Signatories with Unity Trust.
 Cllrs Unter and Marchant signed the forms to remove James Barnes 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

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Payments – March 2023		
SMLM Ltd	Kings Arms - March Men's Shed Donation	£53.00
Offham Village Hall	Hall Hire – Race night	£100.00
Clerk	Reimbursement - Laptop	£400.00
Clerk	March 2023 Salary	£886.49
HMRC	March 2023 PAYE and NI	£233.69
Clerk	Expenses – February 23	£18.20

Cllrs Unter and Scullion will approve the payments.

- d) To consider and approve appointment of Internal Auditor 2022/2023
 The appointment of the current auditor Lionel Robbins was approved for another year.
- e) To consider any other financial matters
 There were no other financial matters.

11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

There were no Agenda items.

The Meeting concluded at 9.25pm.

Date of the next Parish Council meeting: Tuesday 4th April 2023 at 7.30pm

Signed *C. E. M. Unter*

Dated *4/4/23*