

MINUTES of OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL meeting
Held on **Tuesday 6th June 2023 at 7.30PM** in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

Councillors Present:

Cllr C Unter (Chairman)
Cllr S Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P Bailey
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr M Scullion (left at 9.05pm)
Cllr C Stephens
Cllr S Taylor

Also in attendance:

County Councillor Sarah Hohler (7.30 – 7.45pm), Borough Councillors Trudy Dean and Roger Roud, 2 members of public (including one candidate for co-option), Lynne Mackie (Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST.** To receive apologies for absence and declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest. Apologies were received from Borough Councillor Tatton. There were no Declarations of Interest.
2. **MINUTES** To receive and approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th May 2023, the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2023 and the meeting held on 16th May 2023 for signature
It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th May 2023, the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 16th May 2023 and the meeting held on 16th May 2023 be approved and signed as an accurate record by Cllr Unter.
3. **CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBER.** To consider and approve Co-Option of New Member.
Sue Taylor has put her name forward for co-option and gave some information about herself by way of background. There was a discussion and it was **AGREED** that she be co-opted. Cllr Taylor was welcomed onto the Parish Council and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
4. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**
 - a) County Councillor Hohler
 - Planning applications – there was a discussion about extra noise from blasts at Blaise Farm Quarry and independent monitoring of the increased blasts.
 - School parking - there are not only a lot of pupils but nursery parking as well. Cllr Hohler offered any help she could. She has been in correspondence with the Executive Head.
 - KCC has a new Chairman, Gary Cooke and Vice-Chairman, Bryan Sweetland.
 - Roger Gough, the Leader of KCC, has written to the Director General of the BBC. To save money they want to cut output from radio Kent but we are the biggest county, the radio is widely used for travel news etc. KCC and the Kent Resilience Forum have a good relationship with Radio Kent, so they quickly pick anything up in cases of emergency.
 - The new Highways Manager is Andy Watson
 - The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, was in Kings Hill last week talking to Kent Trading Standards about vaping
 - Natural England has announced Shaun the Sheep as the new Champion of the Countryside Code
 - There is a ban on E-scooters on trains because of the fire risk. If you have an E-scooter you should not leave it in your house or by the door, as it could block your exit if it catches fire.
 - KCC Archives organise talks, and there is one coming up about William Harrison and the Kent Clipper.
 - Produced in Kent is going to be working with farms on a gleaning project. University of Kent students can go to the farms and work on the environmental impact of food waste.
 - There is a lot of cross border policing for the farming community as so many expensive vehicles are being stolen. The Police Rural Task Force has a good relationship with them.

Cllr Unter asked about a news report saying that KCC are considering reducing waste recycling locations. Cllr Hohler said this has been to committee as KCC need to save a lot of money. Allington

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Initials.....



Recycling Centre is safe but there are another 4 that will go to consultation. There is concern about whether this will increase fly tipping. Cllrs discussed fly tipping problems, which it is believed have got worse since the Bulky Refuse collections stopped. There has been dumping on Seven Mile Lane.

b) Borough Councillors Dean

Cllr Roud reported:

- Fly tipping – there are a lot of problems in East Malling as well. TMBC have got CCTV cameras now that we can move around and one is looking at fly tipping.
- He is interested in updates about Blaise Farm Quarry as there is one at the other end of the ward looking to expand. He would like to look at the Offham Quarry. There were a lot of complaints when the other Quarry was moving towards East Malling. People reported ground shake but it was more air blast and the damage to buildings is more limited.
- A big worry is the proposed development of Bradbourne Village – 1500 houses at the Eastern End of East Malling and an extra road. It is likely that the road would impact West Malling and Offham, but KCC say it is to relieve the traffic on London Road.
- JTB parking review – there wasn't anything that impacted Offham

Cllr Dean reported:

- There is a meeting tomorrow of the Housing and Planning Committee to talk about how they will handle the new Local Plan. Effectively they need to start again. If everything goes to plan the timetable assumes approval for the new plan in 2026 – so there will be another three years without any protection of a Local Plan. This means a developer can go to appeal, and Government guidance is that unless there are extenuating circumstances, the developer must get approval. Extenuating circumstances were tested by a developer on London Road. Being in Green Belt and bio-diverse were not sufficient to be qualified as extenuating circumstances.
- TMBC has agreed there is going to be another Regulation 18 document reissued, and it will include all of the new policies and 54 new sites which have been put forward since the publication of the old document. TMBC have said the only way they can have capacity to do the re-writing is if they have full staffing of the planning department which they don't at the moment. It won't be easy to get full staffing and they have had to put £320,000 into budget to fund this new work. The loss of the original Local Plan has proved expensive in many ways.
- Re: The change of political balance of Borough – 20 conservatives joined with 2 independents, so they will continue to control Council. Every decision taken will be on the casting vote of the Chair, so it will be quite volatile for the next 4 years. There is an acceptance that the Borough Council needs to be more cross party, so hopefully it will be more balanced than before.
- The Mobile Clinic is coming to Offham. Everyone is encouraged to get tested for something – if you don't use it you'll lose it. Testing blood pressure, cholesterol etc which needs regular checking. Thanks were given to the Village Hall for allowing them to set up
- KCC produced a paper about the provision of special educational needs for children. There are 14,500 waiting for assessment at any one time and Kent has been criticised for the backlogs
- KCC have said roads are in "managed decline" as it doesn't have the budget to repair them.

c) Police

We have had a letter from the local Inspector to say there will be a number of Officers available to come to Parish Council meetings, but no more than every 3 months or so. They would like to hear from us in advance about any questions we have.

4. **PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:**

a) Blaise Farm (13.09.23) – CU and SW

- i. Quarry – the increased blasts have started. Cllr Unter heard a deeper louder boom than previously. We have had correspondence from Kings Hill Parish Council with concerns from residents although we don't know what those concerns are. They want to work with us but we should wait for longer until we get results of the blasts then link up with our neighbours.
- ii. IVC Waste Management - There was nothing to report.
- iii. AD Plant - There was nothing to report.

b) Offham Landfill Site

There was nothing further to report.

c) Offham Village Hall

The Committee have a new booking Clerk. The Cinema is carrying on over the summer. The Healthcheck is 1-4pm on Monday 12th. The Committee have said thank you very much for the Grant from the Parish Council.

Cllr Unter reported that the ownership has been resolved and registered with the Land Registry and we have final invoice which we will pass to the Village Hall.

d) Offham Primary School

Cllr Stephens said that the school had circulated details of another meeting that had gone well, and their status has been changed to good. Cllr Stephens agreed to be the Parish Council's formal representative. He noted that his wife is likely to be a School Governor.

The Head teacher is keen on improving the road situation during drop off and pick up and Cllr Unter has been in touch with Kent Highways and Cllr Hohler. Perhaps some signs at the Primary School that could light up in the morning and afternoon to alert drivers could be helpful, and Cllr Hohler wanted to see if the Parish Council would support this. Cllrs AGREED.

Cllr Marchant has been asked by residents what is happening with Church Road and North Meadow junction. Kent Highways had proposed some changes but then said the funding was not available. A question was asked about whether the entrance gate could be moved a little further down to the other side of the triangle.

The police could be asked to attend.

5. **PLANNING AND LICENSING:**

a) New applications

There were no new applications.

b) Approvals

i. **TM/23/00802/LDP - The Old Rectory, Aldon Lane**

Lawful Development Certificate Proposed: 2m interwoven fence panels along site boundary

c) Refusals

There were no refusals.

d) Any other planning matters

i. **TM/22/02218/FL - Teston Cottage, Teston Road - New enlarged roof to create a loft**

bedroom over existing kitchen, new traditional dormer to garden side, new flat roof to extend over existing utility, forming distinct separation between historic front house and new rear extension. APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL

ii. **TM/22/02219/LB - Teston Cottage, Teston Road - Listed Building Application: New**

enlarged roof to create a loft bedroom over existing kitchen, new traditional dormer to garden side, new flat roof to extend over existing utility, forming distinct separation between historic front house and new rear extension. APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL

iii. **Kentfield Farm. The application for a second license was refused by the Committee and the Applicant has three weeks to appeal. An email has been received from Ian Barwick with the numbers of events being held per month for this year. One of the License Conditions was that the Parish Council are notified in advance. 43 events have been detailed. The Parish Council will ask for details of the date, type of event and numbers.**

There was a discussion. The Parish Council only makes objections on behalf of residents and it is not the role of Councillors to liaise and negotiate about the licence.

Cllr Unter has spoken to Ian who was keen for people to visit. Cllr Unter said Councillors could to attend as individuals and not as Parish Councillors.

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) Highways Working Group and Improvement Plan

Cllr Unter is in correspondence with Emma Tilbury of Kent Highways. It is understood that most people in the village who have expressed a view would like a 20mph limit along Teston Road, but it is not unanimous. There are concerns that if people expect vehicles to be travelling at only 20mph, it will make it more dangerous if they are not. The majority of Councillors want to work with KCC for a 20mph limit through the Village.

KCC have asked if there are other areas where a traffic survey should be carried out. Cllrs agreed that Church Road should be included, and Comp Lane.

It was agreed that the speed restriction as you come into the village should be moved back from the gateway to encompass Spadework and the bend before it, and ideally should go to Offham Road.

It had been hoped the junction with Aldon Lane and Teston Road could be remodelled but KCC think it is ok. They have agreed to paint a slow sign in the road and moved the Horses Sign to face into Aldon Lane.

A Working Group is not in place yet but after Cllr Unter has met Emma it is hoped to move this forward. Speedwatch was discussed. No volunteers have put their names forward yet. This will be highlighted in emails and the Parish Council Newsletter.

There was a discussion about North Meadow.

b) To confirm use of Mailchimp as Bulk Email Provider

Group emails are being blocked by the spam filter so cannot be sent through our email provider. It was agreed that to avoid this, Mailchimp should be used. It will take some time to set up the contacts list in order to send out Village Emails.

c) Village Green Lease - SGN

The Clerk has emailed the solicitor and is waiting for a response.

d) Defibrillator Training

This will be advertised.

e) To consider TMBC Climate Change Strategy

Cllr Unter stressed the importance of this. He has emailed information from a KALC Conference on Climate Change to Cllrs to read before the next meeting.

f) The Well on The Green

Cllr Marchant and Bailey will meet to discuss when they have the opportunity. Steve Rickett has previously agreed to help.

6. OPEN FORUM - Public Participation Session

There were no questions.

8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST

a) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footways problems (www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem)

At Hodges Place the hedge has overgrown the path and you cannot walk on the path. Cllr Unter will contact the owners to discuss.

Cllr Williams reported cars parking at the end of Pepinsgraw so wheelchairs and pushchairs cannot pass on the path. The Clerk will provide notices that can be put onto car windscreens which the Parish Council has used before. The Parish Council had asked for yellow lines in the past. The Parish Council can talk to Andy Bracey at TMBC to request yellow lines here and at the top of North Meadow. Cllr Roud will raise this and Cllr Unter will send him a map of the locations. Cllr Williams can provide photos.

Cllr Dean has received a request about the junction of Church Road and Teston Road, about people who park close to the junction so that vehicles turning onto Teston Road cannot see around corner. What does the Parish Council think about yellow lines here? There was a discussion. Cllrs were aware the situation has been worse recently due to building works, but residents park here and have nowhere else to park. It does block sight lines when turning right out of Church Road. Cllr Dean will provide more information about the request for Cllrs to consider.

Cllr Roud can include this location in the discussions with TMBC.

b) 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

- o Village Green – Cllrs Williams, Marchant and Bailey are to meet and discuss, also taking account of the grass outside Cedar Lodge and the cars parking on the grass near Hayes Lane
- o Cosgrave Field – Cllrs have seen details of the benches from Kedel, who provided the bench donated by The Methodist Church. A picnic table and a bench were suggested. Cllr Bailey will look at alternative suppliers. A concrete base will be needed to secure any picnic table or bench.
- o A bench has been left next to the dog waste bin by the pond. Cllr Marchant will remove it.
- o Another Cllr is needed to look after the Defibrillator
- o If Cllrs notice the battery on the SID is dead, please could they notify Cllr Bailey.

- Trees – The Wellingtonia by the school has been swamped by neighbouring bushes. This was planted as a memorial tree. Cllr Stephens will liaise with the school and ask if Cllr Marchant can tidy up the bushes around the Wellingtonia.
- c) To discuss play area repairs and replacement plans
Cllrs will look at this when time is available.
Cllr Williams completed the hedge survey. The laurel hedge beside the play area has overgrown blocking the path around the edge of the play area and is almost in the play area. Cllr Marchant will provide a quote for cutting this back.
- 9. **EVENTS.** To receive reports on past events and to discuss events coming soon
- a) Internal Audit 2022 – 2023 – 31.05.23
This was noted.
- b) Village Green Grass Treatment – 15.06.23
This was noted.
- c) Defibrillator Training
This has been discussed.
- d) Mens Shed – The Kings Arms – Every Thursday
This continues as before. There is a need to sort out ongoing funding.
- e) 2024 Calendar
Cllr Williams was congratulated for putting together a fantastic calendar. These are on sale and she has already sold 25.
Cllr Scullion had to leave the meeting due to work commitments at 9.05pm. He reported that due to personal circumstances he has to step down from the Parish Council, but hopes to re-join again in the future. Cllr Unter said that Matt had been fantastic in his role over the last two years and wished him and Saffi all the best.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- a) 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.

- b) To consider and approve invoice payments

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Payments – June 2023		
SMLM Ltd	Kings Arms- June Men's Shed	£62.50
Offham Village Hall	Annual Donation	£1,000.00
C Unter	Reimbursement Costs KALC Award	£16.00
Lionel Robbins	Internal Audit Fee 2022-2023	£90.00
Clerk	June 2023 Salary	£1,002.00
HMRC	June 2023 PAYE and NI	£301.85
Clerk	Expenses May 2023	£27.30
Surrey Hills Solicitors	First Registration of Village Hall Title	£140.00
Viking	Office Supplies	£72.00

Cllrs Bailey and Marchant will approve the payments.

- c) To receive and consider Internal Auditor's Report 2022-2023
The report was received and considered by Councillors. It was **RESOLVED** that there was no action required.
- d) To review the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control. Councillors to are asked to consider the Statement of Internal Control in support of the Annual Governance Statement



Councillors considered and approved the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31 March 2023 at the May meeting and this was signed by the Chairman and Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council.

- e) To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023, Section 1 of the AGAR Form 3 for the year ending 31 March 2023.

The Council considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023 and answered "yes" to all the statements. The Chairman and Clerk signed and dated the Statement on behalf of the Parish Council.

- f) To approve the Accounting Statements for 2022-2023, Section 2 of the AGAR Form 3 for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2023

The Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 as provided by the Responsible Financial Officer who had prior to the meeting signed and dated Section 2 of the AGAR for 2022-2023. The Chairman signed and dated the Accounting Statement on behalf of the Parish Council.

- g) To note the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights as selected by the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer (03.07.23-11.08.23)

The Council notes the period for the Exercise of Public Rights from Monday 3rd July to Friday 11th August 2023.

- h) To consider any other financial matters

Cllrs Agreed to remove Cllr Scullion as a signatory with Unity Trust Bank and add Cllr Taylor.

11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The vacancy will be advertised and there can be a co-option at the next meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 9.17pm.

Date of next Meeting - Tuesday 4th July 2023 at 7.30pm

Signed

C. E. M. Lusk

Dated

4/7/23

Initials.....

CEM