



MINUTES of OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL meeting
Held on **Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7.30PM** in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

Councillors Present:

Cllr S Taylor (Chair)
Cllr S Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P Bailey
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr C Stephens

Also in attendance:

Borough Councillor Roud (7.30 – 7.45pm), 1 member of public, L 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. There were apologies from Cllr Steer, County Cllr Hohler and Borough Cllr Dean. There was a Declaration of Interest from Cllr Taylor about planning application TM/23/03383/HH – Stocketts, as she is a neighbour. Cllr Marchant declared an interest in the Maintenance Contract, as the contractor.
2. **MINUTES** To receive and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2023 for signature. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of meeting held on 5th December 2023 be approved and signed as an accurate record by Cllr Taylor.
3. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**
 - a) County Councillor Hohler
Cllr Hohler has provided the following report:
 - Eurostar have announced that they will not be stopping in Kent in 2024
 - There has been a huge increase in potholes: from 1,959 from October 1st to December 19th in 2021 to 5,510 in the same period in 2023.
 - Making Space for Nature, Kent and Medway's nature recovery strategy, has been launched and is aimed at drawing on widespread partner and public participation to help tackle habitat loss, protect ecosystems and ensure diversity in the county's natural environment.
 - b) Borough Councillor Roud
Borough Councillor Roud reported:
 - The 2021 application for Ashtree Farm for a permanent marquee has been approved. There are a whole host of conditions, including about noise.
 - There was a discussion about a number of planning applications in East and West Malling which will have an impact on the local area, particularly on traffic. The sites included Clare Lane, Winterfield Estate, Watringbury Road and Hermitage Lane.
 - Parking charges are being discussed at the TMBC meeting tonight which Cllr Dean is attending.
 - c) Police
There was no report.
4. **PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:**
 - a) Blaise Farm
 - i. Quarry
There was nothing to report.
 - ii. IVC Waste Management
There was nothing to report.
 - iii. AD Plant
There was nothing to report.
 - b) Offham Landfill Site
There was nothing to report.

c) Solar Park

The application has been approved. It was noted that some engineering work has been taking place at the Landfill Site. The Parish Council has been in email correspondence with Infinis and the Chair will meet with their representative. They have asked to come to a meeting, which can be arranged after the initial introduction.

d) Offham Village Hall

Cllr Williams is attending the meeting tomorrow.

e) Offham Primary School

Cllr Steer has asked for a question to be raised by a resident who is also a parent at the school asking about parking at the school.

Concern remains about vehicles travelling the wrong way along North Meadow. It was agreed that the school should liaise with the field owner about the possibility of moving the entrance to the field away from the North Meadow junction. Cllr Stephens will discuss this with the school.

It was noted that cars sometimes park in the layby in Church Road which creates a bottle neck at school time as vehicles cannot use it to pass. The Clerk will contact the school and ask them to send out a reminder not to use the layby as it blocks traffic.

5. **PLANNING AND LICENSING:**

a) New applications

TM/23/03383/HH - Stocketts, Aldon Lane - Remodeling and realignment of the existing access to allow vehicles to enter from the east, including replacement of the existing frontage wall and erection of new railings and electric gates

Cllr Taylor left the room having declared an interest.

There was a discussion. Cllrs agreed:

- This corner of Aldon Lane is pivotal to the conservation area. The application to alter the character of materials used from stone to metal railings is out of keeping with the street scene of the Conservation Area, which will be affected by this proposal
- The Conservation Officer should be contacted to comment on the impact of this proposed change
- The surrounding street scene is continuous ragstone walls and this alteration would not be in keeping. It is in a conservation area and it needs to be in keeping.
- Widening and changing the orientation of the entrance will impact traffic movements onto the bend in the road with Aldon House which is on the opposite side of the lane and will become more vulnerable to traffic travelling in either direction.
- The entrance can be widened in its current form. Any further privacy requirements can be achieved within the curtilage as the property sits a good way back from the lane by landscape screening or fencing within the boundary which would not affect the conservation area street scene.

Cllr Taylor returned to the room.

b) Approvals

There were no approvals to report.

c) Refusals

There were no refusals to report.

d) Any other planning and Licensing matters

TM/23/03246/HH - Stocketts, Aldon Lane - Erection of a garage and home gym incidental to the main dwelling and creation of hardstanding (alternative to 23/01907/LDP) (Objections)

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

a. To consider co-option of new Parish Councillor

Cllrs will consider residents who may be interested in the role.

Initials.....



- b. To consider KALC Community Awards Scheme and Offham Village Awards
There was a discussion and the recipient of the KALC Award was AGREED. Cllrs agreed to present 3 Offham Village Awards and the recipients were AGREED.
- c. Parish Councillor Areas of Responsibility: Representatives and Wardens
Cosgrave Field – Cllr Marchant
Village Green – Cllr Marchant
PPP – rotate between Cllrs
Blaise Farm – Cllr Taylor
KALC T&M – rotate between Cllrs
Highways Working Group – Cllr Bailey, David Frankling and Steve Rickett
Village hall – Cllr Williams
Trees – Cllr Williams
Pound – Cllr Williams
Book box – Wendy Williams and Rachel Godfrey
Play area weekly inspections – Cllrs Bailey, Stephens and Williams
Play area – Cllr Bailey
Recreation ground – Cllr Marchant
Village Green Bus Shelter – Cllr Marchant
SID – Cllr Bailey. Cllr Bailey noted this had been damaged and now leaks. The Clerk will contact Highways to see if they offer a service to carry out maintenance or calibrate the SID.
Offham Landfill – Cllr Stephens
Primary School – Cllr Stephens
Solar park – Cllr Taylor
Wellbeing, to include Men's Shed – Cllr Steer
Defibrillator – Cllr Williams and David Frankling
Pond - Dave Frankling and Steve Rickett
Speedwatch – Cllr Steer
- d. Defibrillator – to approve purchase of new batteries and paediatric pads
Cllrs approved the purchase of a new battery when needed and of paediatric pads.
- e. To receive confirmation of completion of Village Green Lease with SGN
Completion was confirmed. The Clerk will contact the solicitors about the money due from SGN.
- f. To consider Parish Council's postal address
The Clerk has contacted the Village Hall Committee about the possibility of putting a post box outside the committee room for Parish Council post. Cllr Williams has offered to check the post box every week. Cllr Williams will discuss this at the Committee Meeting.
- g. To consider an Offham Resilience/Emergency Plan
Cllrs Taylor and Stephens attended a course about emergency plans, to be used in case of a natural disaster, flooding, flu, infectious diseases, severe cold weather, severe heat wave, essential service loss, security incidents etc. When events happen, residents often rely on neighbours, and Cllr Marchant helps out in many situations.
Some community training is available this month, and the Clerk can circulate details.
We have a plan from Addington Parish Council which can be used as a template. This will be on the February Agenda.
The school could get involved with the Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award.
- h. To consider Climate Change Strategy
Cllr Taylor attended a Carbon Legacy course last month. This will be on the agenda next month.
- i. To note short term closure of Recreation Gound Car Park in January/February to enable play area refurbishment works
This may be at the end of January or start of February, depending on whether, and is needed for when the track is laid. The contractor will need to close off some car park spaces for one day.
Cllr Stephens agreed to deliver notices to nearby residents. A sign will also be put up by the contractor giving notice of works.

7. OPEN FORUM - Public Participation Session

Cllrs need to include the following as part of their regular checks:

- Gutters – these have not been swept for about 3 months. TMBC need to be contacted if the gutters are full to make arrangements to have them cleaned. Cllr Marchant will deal with this.
- The footpath at the Western end of Teston Road is covered in leaves and debris and needs clearing, approaching the gateway on the left hand side.
- Litter bins and Dog Waste Bins should be checked and reported to TMBC if overflowing. Cllrs Marchant and Williams will check the bins.

On behalf of the Men's Shed, a request was made for ongoing pastoral support from the Parish Council. There was a discussion. It was noted that Offham Open House is a similar organisation for women in the village, but the members pay their own contributions, carry out fund raising and have even donated money to the Parish Council for village projects. The Parish Council has funded the Men's Shed, sometimes fully and sometimes partly with the contributions, for 2 years. The Parish Council is facing budget issues and may need to ask the Men's Shed attendees to pay more.

8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST

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

There were no further issues to discuss.

- b) To consider Highways Improvement Plan

Kent Highways have emailed to say they will consider extending the 30mph speed limit beyond the Spadework entrance. If the Parish Council want to pursue this, there must be a public consultation, and if 5 residents object then the speed limit will not be changed.

Cllrs discussed this. There will be a benefit for Spadework, but there will be a lot of work and cost for the Parish Council, and ultimately it won't slow down traffic or benefit the village. Efforts can continue to be made to sort out the North Meadow junction or to try and achieve a 20mph limit through the village. Speedwatch is a good scheme that will slow traffic down.

- c) To receive reports about Speedwatch

There is nothing to report.

- d) 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 Williams can apply to the Woodland Trust for trees next year, when the Parish Council has a plan for how many trees and where they will be planted. There was a discussion about removing the hedge between the play area and Pepingstraw, which is in a poor condition, and using hedging from the Woodland Trust to replace it.

- e) To receive maintenance contract

Cllr Marchant declared an interest and left the room.

Cllrs are happy with the way the Maintenance Contract has been carried out and note the work Cllr Marchant does in the village. The contract should continue to be monitored. Items to add to the tender request – edging the perimeter track, clearing the grass off the track and clearing around the concrete bases of the new equipment.

Cllr Marchant returned to the room.

- f) To discuss play area replacement project

Phase One is ordered and underway. The track works will commence, but are weather dependent, at the end of January/beginning of February and will take 2-3 weeks. Next week the football equipment will be delivered. The rest of the equipment is on order and should be delivered and installed end of February beginning of March. There will be an official opening after Phase One has been completed.

Phase Two is for the enclosed Play Park. An application has been submitted for funding from FCC but this won't be considered until 14th March. We have discovered that the Church has also made an application to FCC for funding.

Initials.....



The quote for the equipment was held until 31st December 2023, after which there may be a 5% increase.

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

a) Annual Parish Meeting

The Village Hall only has availability on a Friday evening for the APM during school holidays. Cllrs Agreed to the meeting being held on 5th April 2024. Cllrs Stephens and Bailey gave their apologies.

b) Carols in the Pub 21.12.23

This went well.

c) Aldon Lane Road Closure 31.01.24 – 01.02.24 (Openreach)

This was noted.

d) Mens Shed – The Kings Arms – Every Thursday

It was suggested if donations could be made to £2, this could become self funding. Any money collected above the £20 per week can fund those who are unable to contribute or to pay for weeks when there is a low attendance.

e) To consider Fund Raising Event (race night) 2024

Cllr Williams has booked the Village Hall for 27th April. The Malling Lions will be able to confirm if the date is ok after their next meeting. Wendy W is getting prices for fish and chips.

Cllrs were asked to get suitable donations for the auction and raffle prizes.

Headed notepaper from Lynne and go to supermarkets they will give you bottles of whiskey

Cllr Williams has prepared posters advertising for the 2025 Calendar.

11. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

a) To receive updates on Parish Councillor Signatories with Unity Trust

Cllr Steer has received details from Unity Trust but Cllr Stephens is waiting to hear from them.

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 Taylor

The Clerk has reported that parish reserves are low, with most reserves being allocated for project funding and play area. All payments are on track, other than those previously highlighted.

c) To consider and approve invoice payments

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Payments – January 2024		
SMLM Ltd	Kings Arms – January Men's Shed	£19.10
Fred Steer	Materials for Speedwatch Sign	£9.98
Viking Direct	Office Supplies	£149.29
Vision ICT	Biennial Fee for domain renewal fee	£108.00
Clerk	January 2024 Salary	£800.25
HMRC	January 2024 PAYE and NI	£197.41
Clerk	December 23 Travel Expenses	£11.80
Wrotham Computer Care	Anti Virus Software 2 years	£38.71

Cllrs Marchant and Bailey will approve the payments.

d) To consider any approve budget 2023 – 2024

There was a discussion and Councillors approved a budget of £200,596 for 2024/25.

This will be an expensive year with play area works planned, and it was noted how little money the Parish Council has in reserve. For works to the Recreation Ground and Play Area, even though grant funded, the Parish Council must pay the VAT. The VAT can be reclaimed but that may take months.

Initials.....

If successful with the grant from FCC, that will only cover up to 90% of the costs. Parish reserves and fund raising must pay the other 10% minimum plus VAT. The VAT will be reclaimed but needs to be paid initially. The Parish Council would like to wait until later in the year, when its financial position is more fully known, to make a donation to the Village Hall. Cllr Williams will raise this at the Village Hall meeting.

Employment Costs	£14,409
Clerks Travel	£200.00
Cllr Expenses	£150.00
Training	£560.00
Office Supplies	£300.00
Professional Fees and Admin	£1325.00
Hire of Hall	£300.00
Churchyard Gardening	£1,000.00
Open Spaces	£7,320.00
Play Area and Recreation	
Ground	£164,857.72
Insurance	£1,700.00
Audit	£450.00
Traffic Calming, SID and	
Speedwatch	£1,250.00
Parish Property	£2,675.00
Contingency	£2,000.00
Annual Parish Meeting	£150.00
Donations	£1,280.00
Bus Funding	£220.00
Subscriptions	£450.00
TOTAL BUDGET	£200,596.72

e) To consider and approve Precept Request 2023-2024

The Parish Council and Councillors are very active and achieve a lot in the village. Councillors AGREED that to continue to be as active, to carry out as much work for the improvement of the village as possible and to undertake planned projects, the precept must be increased. A precept request of £27,137 was AGREED. This represents £67.23 per Band D property. The Parish Council has funding of £75,324.04 agreed from TMBC for phase 1 of the recreation ground regeneration. The Parish Council has applied for a grant of £75,000 from FCC for phase 2 the enclosed play park. The balance of the budget of £14,011 +VAT will be funded from parish reserves. The precept represents an increase of £4.69 or 7.5% from 2023 – 2024.

f) To consider any other financial matters

There were no other financial matters.

g) Confidential Agenda Item: to consider NALC National Salaries Pay Scale Increase Agreement for Clerk

Cllrs AGREED to the NALC National Salaries increase award for the Clerk. Cllrs AGREED to increase the pay scale of the clerk to NALC SCP 25 from 2024-2025.

12. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

There were no items. Date of Next Monthly Meeting – **Tuesday 6th February 2024**. The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed
Dated 6/2/2024

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Initials.....