



DRAFT MINUTES of **OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL** meeting
Held on **Tuesday 3rd September 2024** at **7.30PM** in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

Councillors Present:

Cllr S Taylor (Chair)
Cllr S Williams (Vice-Chair)
Cllr J Altin
Cllr P Bailey
Cllr A Marchant
Cllr F Steer

Also in attendance:

L Mackie (Clerk), 5 members of public (3 residents left at 8.37 after item 7d)

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 County Councillor Hohler and Borough Councillors Dean and Tatton. There were no declarations of interest.
2. **TO CONSIDER PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY AND CO-OPTION**
Residents were encouraged to consider putting themselves forward for co-option.
3. **MINUTES** To receive and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2024 for signature It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of meeting held on 2nd July 2024 be approved and signed as an accurate record by Cllr Taylor.
3. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**
 - a) County Councillor Hohler
There was no report.
 - b) Borough Councillor Dean
The following report has been provided:
 - The owner of the WM Farmers Market has emailed Matt Boughton about the loss of ten stall holders following the imposition of car parking fees in the Ryarsh Lane Car Park.
 - KCC appears to be changing its policy with regard to 20mph schemes once more.
 - A two year contract extension has been granted to CSKL for the disposal of 75,000 tonnes of green bin dry mixed recyclables annually. Changes in legislation governing materials and collection frequency are making a or a delay course longer contract inadvisable. Haulage costs are factored into the contract to minimise out of county treatment.
 - 35,000 tonnes of organic waste annually is dealt with at the West Malling in vessel centre now owned by ENVAR composting Ltd. (Previously New Earth Solutions). The contract covers the majority of Kent's organic waste. KCC was unable to agree gate fee terms for mid and west Kent with ENVAR. A 19month contract extension covering those areas, costing £3.2 million, has been agreed with ENVAR. This will be followed by a full competitive tendering exercise based on current technology. I have again stressed that this service should be undertaken at several Kent locations rather than concentration at West Malling which maximises transport emissions, traffic and costs.
 - There is no further news from TMBC on how and when they propose to take forward the draft Local Plan following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework. WMPC would like to work together with OPC to formulate a response to the NPPF.
 - c) Police
Cllr McElligott is no longer working in Offham, but is still very interested in supporting the Village. The Clerk will contact the police to find out who the PC for the village is.
 - d) Village Hall, Primary School, Offham Society
Village Hall - the floor has been redone and the portrait of the King, obtained by the Parish Council, has been put up

Primary School – Cllr Altin volunteered to liaise with the school. Cllrs were interested to know how the new highways scheme outside the school will work.

Offham Society – Simon M was due to attend but has sent his apologies. Cllrs will discuss an email he has sent later in the meeting.

4. PLANNING AND LICENSING:

a) New applications

- i. **24/01300/PA – Quintain Cottage, Teston Road** - Proposed Two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, change of materials and windows, creation of new access and new driveway
Borough Cllr Tatton suggesting making sure they put the granite setts back so they don't upset the furniture of the highway. There were no objections.

b) Approvals

- i. **24/00678/PA - 3 Bramble Hall Cottages, Comp Lane** - Demolition of single storey rear and side additions and garage. Erection of single storey rear extension and 2 storey side extension. Amended scheme to application 22/00433/FL now under construction
- ii. **24/00738/PA - Orchard House, Pepingstraw Close** - Submission of Details Reserved by Condition - Details of condition 6 (bat survey) submitted pursuant to planning permission TM/20/01954/FL (Demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of four detached dwellings together with associated parking, access and landscaping)
- iii. **24/00868/PA - Scout Camp Site Comp Wood, Seven Mile Lane** - Addition to existing Scout building
- iv. **24/00913/PA - Stocketts, Aldon Lane** - Submission of Details Reserved by Condition - Details of Condition 2 (Materials) and 6 (soft landscaping) submitted pursuant to planning permission TM/23/03246/HH (Erection of a garage and home gym incidental to the main dwelling and creation of hardstanding (alternative to 23/01907/LDP))
- v. **24/01014/PA – Offham Manor (listed in Agenda as Brackens) Teston Road** - Tree Notification Conservation Area - Cut back to the boundary between Brackens and Offham Manor the trees overhanging the western and south western boundaries of Brackens. Trees standing in Offham Manor. 1 Silver Birch tree, 1 cobnut tree, one conifer, 1 Scots Pine and 8 Beech trees in total (1 to the south and 7 to the north) and various shrubbery

c) Refusals

There were no refusals.

d) Any other planning and Licensing matters

- i. **24/00812/PA - Comp Corner, Seven Mile Lane** - Conversion of outbuildings into Office, Gym and Entertainment space and erection of a triple garage (Application Withdrawn)
- ii. To discuss Planning Policy Statement, Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Priority Statement
Cllr Taylor and the Clerk attended an online seminar about changes to the planning system. The Government's manifesto pledge is 1.5m houses over 5 years and they have introduced new mandatory housing targets. It is a worry but it is unlikely we will have to worry too much as a community. In 2022, TMBC built 446 homes when the target was 820. The new target is 1057. Going forward under the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), they are going to have to explain fully the infrastructure before housing will be given the green light, which is good. We will not be protected if we don't have our own neighbourhood plan. That is an expensive process because it requires a public consultation and you need to maintain the plan, which creates an ongoing cost. Another idea is a Neighbourhood Priority Statement – a slimmed down version stating our wishes. It is not mandatory but if we have one it would be taken into consideration by the Local Authority. It would also help us if we say our roads can't take any more housing.
West Malling Parish Council are ahead of us. They have asked if we have any questions we want to put forward as part of the NPPF in consultation and we have until 24th September to put anything forward. Most things that will work for West Malling will work for Offham.
Cllr Taylor is attending a planning course on 17th October. Once we know what the legislation is and we have seen the WMPC plan, OPC can consider its own Neighbourhood Priority Statement.

- iii. Working with neighbouring Parishes about NPPF Consultation – 24.09.24
This has been discussed.
- iv. To note new road name suggestions – Barfield Gardens and Moorlands Orchard
Noted.

5. PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:

a) Blaise Farm (Liaison Meeting tbc)

- 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 and Solar Park

Cllr Taylor provided news from Nick Jones, Project Manager at Infinis. They hope the Solar Farm will be operational by 25th November 2024. The new footpath will be one of the last things. Access won't be open until all construction and commissioning has finished, estimated to be around December. They don't have an up-to-date schedule of possible road closures/UKPN works. The Parish Council has a relatively good relationship with Infinis, and they are open and communicative with us. Infinis have provided funding for the extension of the school playground, and they have funded one of our new Notice Boards. Gallagher funded the other new Notice Board. A resident asked if there were any noise restrictions on the solar park, and if there was any information about the site of the new invertors. Cllr Taylor will ask if Nick Jones would attend a meeting so that the neighbouring residents could ask questions.

c) Speedwatch

Cllr Steer reported that sessions have been limited to one a week, sometimes two, over Summer. They have tried early morning sessions at 6.30am. It is all about education - no-one was reported in the last early session. Church Road has been introduced into the rota and a couple of vehicles have been reported speeding here as they go up the hill. There are still 100 vehicles in an hour. There was some activity recently on facebook with a resident asking why people were wearing hi vis, why were they taking numbers of all cars going by etc. The comments were ill informed and not true. Cllr Steer answered the comments accordingly. He was pleased that 3 or 4 residents posted to support Speedwatch. He is setting up a Saturday morning "unofficial" session, inviting anyone to stop and ask questions. He will circulate details. PC McElligott has agreed to attend, along with Jason Wright the Kent CSW Speedwatch officer. Cllr Steer will consider if the school can be involved. Cllr Altin will raise this with the school

d) Maintenance Contract

Details have been circulated to Cllrs and everything is up to date

6. MATTERS ARISING

a) Teston Road junction – residents reports of accidents and Kent Highways actions

Following residents' complaints about safety at the Comp Lane and Seven Mile Lane junction, Kent Highways are investigating what measures can be taken. This is in the early stages. Cllr Hohler has offered some Member Funds to help with a scheme. The problems have also affected Platt and Windmill Hill. Residents have been copying all local parishes into correspondence. Any resident can report issues to highways using the online portal, and the more reports made the more the pressure for highways to take action.

b) To discuss Church Farm traffic

Cllr Altin reported that following a comment on the Facebook Village Site, there were questions about walking at the back of Pepingstraw Close, or parking on the field for school or cricket.

He has noticed lots of additional traffic at school drop off time and collection time with tractors and lorries leaving the farm. This reduces the safety for the children and increases pollution from idling vehicles waiting.

There was a discussion. Cllr Altin said he would liaise with the school.

Cllrs noted the farm is a business, but the Clerk was asked to approach them to ask that they encourage drivers to avoid the window around school drop off time wherever possible. Cllr Altin will find out if school collection time is also affected.

The school has worked really hard, changing drop off times so parents don't wait and have tried to manage the traffic where they can.

c) To consider Teston Road and Aldon Lane Signage

- Residents said that the situation on Aldon Lane was horrendous with vehicles using it to avoid a diversion route. There are no passing points except for driveways. It was reported that signage has disappeared over the years.
On the A20 junction there is an "unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles" sign and also a horse sign. There were width and weight restriction on the bridge, but these signs are no longer there. The Unsuitable for HGV sign was taken down by Highways at the Aldon Lane Junction. The Clerk will ask if Highways can put the signs back as they might help discourage larger vehicles. Cllr Taylor said the Parish Council should be mindful of there already being so much signage.
- The Clerk will obtain an update about the damaged gateway.
- A resident close to the Aldon Lane/Teston Road Junction said that traffic speeds meant there was only a short time to exit their driveway. The Clerk will ask for a "concealed entrance sign"
- Residents reported cars racing on Sundays. Cllr Steer will contact PC McElligott about this and will ask for a Speedwatch Risk assessment near the Western Gateway
- Residents were advised to log these matters on the Kent Highways online portal
- In April 2022, Highways said they would look at the Western Gateway and support slow markings in the road. The Clerk was asked to obtain an update.

d) To receive update about Highways Improvement Plan

There are no updates to report.

e) Kent Highways Local Transport Plan Consultation www.kent.gov.uk/ltp5 - 08.10.24

Noted.

f) To consider Parish Council Projects (ST)

The big project was the playground which has now been completed. The Grand Opening was great with maybe 170 people there. Cllr Williams was thanked for her role, and LJ Betts Farm was thanked for providing the strawberries.

Projects for next year:

- The Quintain
- The Lecturn with the map needs to be relocated
- Fencing and gates around the Play Area
- A step into the Recreation Ground entrance by Pepingstraw due to tree roots
- Teston Road signage in the Recreation Ground and by the car park has different wording about dogs.
- 2 covid signs on the Play Area fence can be repackaged with new wording. Cllr Taylor is dealing.
- Bin stickers asking people to take their rubbish home and providing TMBCs phone number to report that the bin needs emptying. Cllr Williams will deal.
- Topsoil in the Recreation Ground before Winter. Cllr Marchant will deal.
- A hole in the ground front of the goal needs filling. Cllr Bailey will do this. He will get quotes to astro turf this area.

g) To discuss Quintain repairs and maintenance

There have been messages from The Offham Society about The Quintain.

Cllr Taylor is meeting with a resident who is a surveyor and is responsible for listed properties. He has stressed the need to be very careful how we go about restoration or maintenance. The Conservation Officer should be involved and possibly TMBC. Following the survey we can obtain costings for the work. Cllrs AGREED that this needs to be done properly and carefully.

Offham Open House have provided a donation towards this project.

- h) To consider Dog Mess Signs and the Dog Fouling Campaign
Cllr Altin now has the bag and flag kit.
Some types of signs have been demonstrated to deter dog mopping more than others. The packs sold by KBT are A3 which are too large. Cllr Altin will design a suitable poster.
- i) To discuss Concrete Table Tennis Table in Play Area
There is a chip in the surface which Cllr Taylor will report to the contractor.
There is no suitable location to move the table. Cllr Taylor is chasing the contractor who provided a quote for a canopy.
- j) To discuss the location of the new Notice Board by Teston Road Recreation Ground and Car Park
Cllrs Taylor and Bailey have discussed this.
- k) To receive update about Damage to Village Green from SGN works
UKPN say the damage is not where they carried out the works. Cllrs said it is exactly where they worked. Steve R has offered to fill the hole in and was thanked for the offer.
It was reported that one of the gas lids is missing.
- l) To note Biometric border check readiness - Effective 10 November, 2024
It will take 10 mins per person to process people at the ports. The Tunnel has more space and is more organised. A processing centre is being built at Dover but it will not be ready until Easter.

7. OPEN FORUM – Public Participation Session

- When is the Pepingstraw Hedge due to be cut? Cllr Marchant will cut it this month
- Who will clear the gutter? Cllr Marchant said he does this
- Laurel hedge at the back of the children's play area – a resident expressed concern this might be cut back by the developer. Cllr Taylor will see if there is a landscaping plan.
- The Gate to the footpath that runs off Pepingstraw lose is rotten. This is owned by the land owner. It is a public footpath and can be reported to the Kent Public Rights of Way Officer online.
- Vegetation along the footpath needs cutting back. This can be reported to the PROW Office.
- Why has the crossing at the A20 been closed and is it to do with the solar farm? Roadworks information can be found on the One Network website.
- Gas work was completed on the Recreation Ground, and there is a gap in the fencing. A resident has found children running out to collect balls that have escaped.

8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST

- a) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footways problems (www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem)
There are no issues to report.
- 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
There no issues to report.
- c) To discuss Calendar of Village Maintenance Works by Parish Council
Cllr Taylor met with David F, who is leaving the village, to find out about everything he and his group of helpers do. We can never thank him enough for what he has done.
Cllr Taylor has created a diary of village works which is a starting point for discussion. The Parish Council is responsible for: Book Box, Defibrillator, Christmas Lights, Quintain, Gateways in Centre, Duck House, Cosgrave Field, Tommy on the Green, Speed Indicator Devices, The Pound, Village Green, Notice Boards and Recreation Ground.
She has met with Steve R who is happy to carry on his involvement.
Items that the Parish Council is not responsible for include The Pond, Planting at Village Gateways and signage.
The Offham Society has provided a list of possible projects. There was a discussion.
The Offham Society would like to carry out maintenance of the Quintain. This is owned by the Parish Council. Cllrs felt strongly that it should not be maintained by any other group.

Parish Councillors fulfil their roles in their own time and they have statutory responsibilities. The Offham Society suggested the Parish Council employs a handyman. Cllrs did not agree. Cllr Marchant carries out a lot of maintenance work, as do other Councillors. There is not enough money to pay a handyman, and Cllrs did not want to increase the financial burden on residents. Cllrs did not believe there was enough work to justify employing someone. Many residents already help out voluntarily, and their valuable contributions were discussed.

- d) Wellbeing (FS)
There was nothing further to report.
- e) 2025 Fund Raising Calendar (SW)
Calendars have been printed and are available for purchase at £6 each.

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

- a) Offham Garden Safari 14.07.24
This was a fabulous event and made about £5,000.
- b) KALC Training – Nuts and Bolts of Parish Councils – 22.07.24 (FS)
Cllr Steer attended but was not impressed by the training.
- c) Enclosed Play Area Grand Opening 03.08.24
This has already been discussed.
- d) KALC – Post Election Planning Briefing – 21.08.24 (ST and Clerk)
This has already been discussed.
- e) KALC – Advanced Planning Topics for Local Councils – 17.10.24 (ST)
Cllr Taylor is attending.
- f) KALC – Clerks Conference 12.11.24 (Clerk)
The Clerk is attending.
- g) Shedettes (every Tuesday) and Mens Shed (every Thursday) - 10am, Kings Arms
This continues to run well.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- a) To receive bank statements, consider and approve financial statements and to monitor budget
These have been circulated to Cllrs. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the accounts and the statements were signed by Cllr Taylor. No transfers from the Unity Savings Account to the Unity Current Account were needed. Receipts were received for calendar sponsorship (£120) and from Gallagher by way of donation for a new Notice Board (£2,603.74) There were no budget issues to report.

- b) To consider and approve invoice payments

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount £</u>
Payments Approved since the last meeting		
Clerk	August 2024 Salary	841.80
HMRC	August 2024 PAYE and NI	214.78
Clerk	Travel and Reimbursements	74.54
Greenbarnes	Noticeboard – by Offham Recreation Ground	2,603.74
Greenbarnes	Notice Board – by bus shelter	2,603.74
Offham Village Hall Committee	Annual Donation 2024	1,000.00
Offham PCC St Michaels Church	Annual donation Churchyard Gardening 2024	1,000.00
Sue Taylor	Reimbursement costs – play area grand opening 03.08.24	132.53
August total payments		£8,471.13

Payments – September 2024		
Clerk	September 2024 Salary	842.00
HMRC	September 2024 PAYE and NI	214.58
Clerk	Travel, Reimbursements	4.55
Ryarsh Parish Council	Half Share Clerks Conference Fee	35.00
KALC	Advanced Planning Topics For Local Councils 17.10.24	60.00
Satswana	Renewal of DPO Service for One Year	90.00
DA Printers	Printing 150 copies of Village Calendar	786.13
September total payments		2,032.13

Internal Payments

None

Cllrs Bailey and Marchant will authorise the payments with Unity Trust.

- c) To consider updated Fixed Asset Register and Insurance
Cllrs considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the Fixed Asset Register which can be used for insurance purposes.
- d) To consider and approval insurance renewal (01.10.24)
Cllrs considered the quote from Came & Co. There was a discussion. The Clerk reported that the premium will increase further due to changes in the Fixed Asset Register – new play area equipment to be included. Cllrs **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Came & Co.
- e) To receive the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 23-24 audited by Forvis Mazars LLP
The external audit has been completed, with no issues to raise or matters to report. The Parish Council has received the papers and accepted the audit. Cllrs **RESOLVED** that there was no further action to take. The Clerk has published the AGAR on the website.
- f) Notice of Conclusion of Audit – Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2024
The formal notice has been put up on Notice Boards and published on the website
- g) To approve change of contact phone number for Unity Trust
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the contact phone numbers for verification to include the new Parish mobile phone number.

12. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The date of the next monthly meeting has changed and will be held on **Tuesday 8th October 2024** at 7.30pm in The Village Hall

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed

Dated