



**DRAFT MINUTES of OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL** meeting  
Held on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025** at **7.30PM** in The Committee Room, Offham Village Hall

**Councillors Present:**

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

**Also in attendance:**

County Councillor Hohler (left at 7.40), Borough Councillors Dean (left at 9pm) and Tatton (from 7.35), 2 members of public (one resident left at 9pm), 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 Borough Councillor Roud and Robin Betts.
2. **MINUTES** To receive and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 for signature. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 be approved and signed as an accurate record by Cllr Taylor.
3. **TO CONSIDER PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY AND CO-OPTION**  
There are two vacancies to be filled.
4. **EXTERNAL REPORTS**
  - a) County Councillor Hohler
    - A bid for extra funding at Seven Mile Lane has been made, to include double white lines so there is no overtaking. The work already done here includes a non-skid surface.
    - Updated information on Kent Devolution will be available soon. Devolution is for everyone and it is important that Parish Councillors and residents are included in this.
    - Cllr Hohler is stepping down at the next election. Borough Councillor Robin Betts is standing for County Councillor in the election.
  - b) Borough Councillor Dean
    - The Local Plan has been published on the TMBC website, but this has not been promoted. The map includes all sites from 2016, some of which were not promoted in the latest local plan by TMBC which is causing confusion.
    - The further call for sites is on at the moment and finishes on 25<sup>th</sup> March which means there will be another tranche of sites added to the map. People can find the maps very daunting. West Malling is surrounded by sites, but TMBC does not need all of those to satisfy the housing targets. Our new cabinet member says sites will be spread more across the Borough this time.
    - Two new sites in Offham have been added, either side of Church Road to the South of the School.
    - There is a concern that the growth of GPs does not keep track with the growth of developments. The ICB are consulted but they do not talk to the doctors about what the doctors want. We are trying to get TMBC to speak to all GPs to make sure they know what they want in terms of increasing capacity. GPs will have to cope with 20-30% more patients than they thought they would last time.
    - Cllrs Dean, Tatton and Roud presented the petition to lift car parking restrictions in the car park in West Malling, which affect market stall holders. This will be debated at the Cabinet meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The charges also affect stall holders for the Christmas Lights. If they park in the closed area for the market it will reduce the amount of stalls. There is a high cost for the road closures needed for the market, someone to put out signs and barriers etc. If stalls drop in number, there may not be enough for the market to carry on.
    - West Malling Parish Council contributed to the ASB team

- TMBC have been given £70,000 towards a study to look at the possibility of changing the Green Belt boundary. A petition by both West Malling PC and East Malling & Larkfield PC is to have the Green Belt boundary moved to stop growth northwards by Kings Hill
- Cobdown Sports Centre in Ditton has been sold to the Lionesses to use for sports activities which is good news

Borough Councillor Tatton:

- She has provided a report:
  - A series of meetings is underway for Borough Members to enable them to discuss the finer details of the new Local Plan. All information is confidential at this stage. However, as you know, a new Call for Sites is underway and will remain open until 26th March.
  - On-street parking charges have gone live in West Malling. These apply 8am to 8pm 7 days a week with a maximum stay of 4 hours. It is still possible to park for 1 hour on street but a ticket must be obtained. Parking spaces at Water Lane and St Leonards Street are not subject to charges. We remain concerned about the impact the new charges will have on visitors and shoppers and how this will impact local businesses. We will be monitoring the situation very carefully. Meanwhile, Trudy, Roger and I met with TMBC's Deputy Mayor last week to deliver a petition in respect of the issue for the Farmers Market traders who now have nowhere to park for the duration of their stay on market day. Traders need around 7 hours to set up, trade and then pack away and the 4 hour limit across on-street and off-street parking provision makes this impossible. We hope the problem can be solved by the Borough Council allowing traders to purchase extra hours.
  - The Borough Council is starting to look at the way forward for its waste services contract which comes to an end in 2027. The Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee has recommended that the Borough Council remain in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for the purpose of providing household waste and recycling collections and street cleansing, and that contracting out should remain the preferred option. The Committee meets again tomorrow (5th March) when it will look at the key service specification and possible options for decarbonisation of the service
- She has attended the third Local Plan Meeting. They are working their way through the policies. When these have been sorted out, Parish Councils will be involved, maybe through the Parish Partnership Panel. There may be some separate meetings with groups of parishes but we don't have that detail yet. Cllr Dean will write to TMBC and ask them to consult with parishes as groups, as the Parish Partnership Panel is not a good venue.
- The Waste Services contract is one of TMBC's biggest contracts. There are far less complaints now than there were at the start of the contract.

c) Police  
There were no crimes to report.

d) Village Hall, Primary School, Offham Society  
Primary School:

Cllr Taylor met with the Head Teacher at the school, and read a report from the school:

On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February we welcomed parents, school governor Mrs Beth Boyd, local stakeholders including Neil Willis (Offham cricket Club Chairman) and Sue Taylor (Offham parish Council Chair) to listen to a presentation about our Offham Vision Project.

This outlined the plans to develop the pavilion (the PTFA Shed) and wooded areas around the school fields so the children can access more outdoor learning. Examples were given such as how a music lesson could go out into nature and a science lesson could be brought to life

The teaching team spoke passionately about how beneficial this could be to the children's learning. It is not intended to replace the forest school offering in the woods, but to supplement it and make use of the valuable space already in the school grounds. To encourage more outdoors learning on a daily basis and improve the school environment

The school are asking for support for the project, by way of services, donations etc.

The Head Teacher would welcome the donation of an old boat, such as a dinghy, to put out for the children to climb on.

Zig zag lines have been repainted outside school, and we thanked Kent Highways for this today.

Offham Society

Cllr Taylor has spoken to the Chair, Patrick B. The Society has some funds that they would like to use within the village. They have kindly said that they could perhaps donate towards the Quintain or towards painting the central village gates on the Green.

Cllrs are happy for the Offham Society to paint the village gateways.

Cllr Steer said it would be ideal if the gates on the Village Green could be sanded and painted it.

Claire S maintains the flowers and planting near the gate on the Green

**5. PLANNING AND LICENSING:**

a) New applications

- i. **25/00189/PA - Barn Cottage, Seven Mile Lane**, - Part 1 Class A (Prior Approval) - Prior Notification for Larger Home Extension (Part 1 Class A): Single storey rear extension to a depth of 5.0m, maximum roof height of 3.70m, and eaves height of 3.0m  
Prior approval is a technical exercise, to see if they need permission or not. The Parish Council has no comments to make.

b) Approvals

- 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 - Amended with Proposed Description Change (04.12.24)

c) Refusals

There were no refusals to report.

d) Any other planning and Licensing matters

- i. **25/00201/PA- Quintain, The Village Green**: Listed Building Application for the repair of the Quintain, including dismantling and removal offsite to a secure workshop and subsequent re-erection  
James Miller has submitted an application for the Parish Council and the application has been assigned a Planning Officer quickly. All documentation is on the TMBC website for anyone to view. James is contacting 3 companies to ask to quote for the restoration work once approval is granted.
- ii. **25/00158/PA - Teston Cottage, Teston Road** - Tree Notification Conservation Area - T1/T2 Maple, Prune to previous starting 4.5m to 3m  
T3 Purple Plum, Prune to previous starting 6m to 5m  
All works are maintenance purposes and to keep in size with surroundings
- iii. To discuss Planning Policy Statement, Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Priority Statement  
Cllr Taylor reported that with the Local Plan in mind, the Parish Council has said we should have something in place to lay out what would be acceptable within the village. We should protect ourselves by accepting there are changes, and make a statement that says what we think is acceptable e.g. we don't need large houses but need bungalows to allow people to move within the village and smaller properties to encourage younger people into the village. It does not mean this is what will happen, but it helps the planners with the Local Plan, showing them that as a community we have thought about this.  
Cllrs Taylor, Bailey and the Clerk met with Alison Eardley, a Planning Consultant working with West Malling Parish Council. We are not agreeing to anything but are starting a discussion – what do we want and what do we need as a village?  
It has been made clear at the TMBC Parish Partnership Panel that everybody “has to give something up”. It is better if we do this on our terms. We should be a receptive village. If it is going to happen then we should say what we would like, such as materials and the height of properties (eg not 5 storey block of flats). We only have small roads and there is a railway bridge to get to the A20. We do not have the infrastructure to support a large development.  
We need to consult on this as a village and will put together a questionnaire for residents to give their views.

The Local Plan when finished is not the end. It is the beginning. TMBC must deliver 1300 homes each year – so each year they have to find those houses. It is better for us to think about it and as a village, to consider of any village assets we might need or want. For example, if we supported a nursery attached to the school it will be a legacy for younger people coming to village, moving to the school and staying here, which will help keep the community younger.

Some residents will not want any development. All we can do as a Parish Council is be receptive to villagers, find out what they want and take any ideas forward. We want to make it as comfortable for ourselves as we can, to try and minimise the impact on Offham and work with people where possible. To do this we need to understand what villagers want.

We are working with the Consultant on two surveys to send to every house. One is about housing need - how many people live in the house, what sort of property is it etc. The results tell you what your village is made up of and what it is lacking. The second survey is about what people would like to see in the village, what type of design (in keeping with village) what materials used, and what community facilities do we need (e.g. nursery, extended car park for school, better broadband, better phone signal). We can then make a community statement.

The APM in May is a good place to reach the community.

The Consultant thought we should also meet with the planning team at TMBC.

## 6. MATTERS ARISING

a) Road Closure Request – Offham May Day

This was noted.

b) KCC Licence To Cultivate – Gateways at Spadework and Aldon Lane

We met with the KCC Highways Steward Jack Milton who is keen to learn about the village and was very helpful.

We visited the Gateways outside Spadework and at Aldon Lane. Spadework look after the flower beds on their side of the gateway. The Parish Council planted the other side of the road, but this was destroyed when the telecom cabinets were put in. Highways are happy for the Parish Council to maintain this side, but it will be difficult to maintain plants there.

Cllr Marchant weed kills the gateway at the Aldon Lane Gateway. The Offham Society will be asked if they would like to plant and maintain the gateway at Aldon Lane. The idea of the boulders was that they just need weeding and create no maintenance liability for the Parish Council. Highways do not want anything planted that will impair vision.

Any highways issues should be reported on the website.

Highways have no budget for marking out white lines next year, other than on A roads or in a highways emergency. Councillors agreed that planting assists because people look and it naturally makes people slow down. If an area looks nice and well cared for then drivers generally slow down.

c) Draft Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy is at Public consultation -

[www.kent.gov.uk/naturerecovery](http://www.kent.gov.uk/naturerecovery) (12.03.25)

This was noted.

d) Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 - Regulation 25 Notice of Publication of Inspector's Report

This was noted.

e) Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

This has been discussed.

f) To receive any updates about Highways Improvement Plan

- Reflective chevrons have been added to the gateways at both ends of the village
- The ATC equipment has been put down in three locations. One has been installed near Aldon Lane, but we had said we did not want one located there. Vehicles travel very fast here and it is not an accurate reflection of driving through the village. To move towards getting a 20mph limit (which is self enforcing), average speeds need to be less than 24mph and results from near Aldon Lane will be higher than that.
- There is also a road closure through the village and another due next week. Highways have said they will have 4 days of data to use, and then we can reconsider the situation. They will extend the ATC for a further three days

- g) Great British Spring Clean 21.03.25- 06.04.25  
Details will be passed to Simon M who organises litter picks.  
A number of villagers collect litter regularly. There was a discussion about why littering has become so bad.
- h) To confirm Maintenance Contract Award 2025  
Cllr Marchant left the room.  
The Clerk has approached contractors to try and get 3 quotes and has received two. Cllr Marchant has confirmed the cost would be the same as last year. The second quote received is almost 3 times more than Cllr Marchant's quote.  
It was AGREED to award the Maintenance Contract to Cllr Marchant.  
Cllr Marchant returned to the room.
- i) Annual Review: Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Bye-Laws, Media Policy, Complaints Procedure, Freedom of Information Act, Retention of Documents and Records, Tree Management Policy, Travel and Expenses Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, GDPR Action Plan, Grievance Procedure and Risk Assessments  
Cllrs have received and had the opportunity to consider the existing policies and documents. They did not believe any changes were needed. Cllrs **APPROVED** the documents.

**7. PARISH COUNCILLOR REPORTS:**

- a) Blaise Farm (Liaison Meeting tbc)
- i. Quarry  
There was a big blast the other day with comments made on social media, but no complaints were made to the Parish Council.
  - ii. IVC Waste Management  
There was nothing to report.
  - iii. AD Plant  
There was nothing to report.
- b) Offham Landfill Site (FCC Environment) and Solar Park (Infinis)  
Cllr Taylor read a report from Infinis:
- o Painting the gate and fence outside of the solar development should be started in the next 2-3 weeks. They are going for a green container colour so it blends in a little better
  - o Energisation on site will be coming up in April and they are hoping to export in May
  - o The solar panels are now fitted on site and the electrical team are focusing on final terminations and site communications
  - o The UKPN/ALS works are drawing to a close with all the major ducts now in place. They just have to pull cables and comms to finish the job
  - o They expect the Public Rights of Way will not be opened until all snags and planting are finalised so this will probably be around August this year, although as they progress they will be able to firm up the date
- c) To discuss Quintain Repairs and Maintenance (ST)  
This has been discussed
- d) TMBC Parish Partnership Panel 06.02.25 (ST)  
Cllr Taylor attended. The Chief Executive of TMBC, Damien Roberts, and the Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, took part.
- e) Fire Hydrant Checks in the Village (all)  
All checks have been carried out and there are no issues to report.
- f) Wellbeing (FS)  
Mens Shed and Shedettes continue to go very well. There was the biggest number at Shedettes last week.
- g) Speedwatch

The group are running 2 sessions a week and it is going well. Last Friday, the session near Spadework had largest volume traffic – 220 in one direction in an hour and an almost equivalent number traveling into village. Unfortunately, the team had their first experience of a negative response from a driver.

- h) Community Emergency Resilience Plan  
Cllr Taylor is working on the plan.
- i) To consider Diary of Village Works  
Gateways have been discussed. Signs in the village need cleaning.
- j) To consider Parish Council Projects (all)  
There were no updates.

**8. MONTHLY CHECK-LIST**

- a) To note any Highways, Footpaths and Footways problems ([www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem))  
There were no reports.
- 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
  - Baxter Homes, developing the site on Pepingstraw Close, have agreed to tidy up the entrance into the Recreation Ground from Pepingstraw Close
  - The developer will not be carrying out any work to the fence between the site and the Recreation Ground.
  - The equipment in the play area needs cleaning
  - Cllr Marchant will be cutting the grass soon and carrying out the top dressing
  - Cllr Bailey has reinstated the nets on the football posts
  - Cllr Bailey has repaired a swing
  - Cllr Marchant will deal with the edges around the path when he cuts the grass
  - Marion Regan and Church Farm were thanked for providing a 360 tractor to get rid of 3 trailer loads of silt from the pond. The Pierces at Orchard Place Farm were thanked for taking the silt away and dealing with it. Steve R was thanked for orchestrating everything and carrying out the work. The Pond looks amazing
  - Cllr Marchant will install the stone near Hayes Lane
  - Cllr Bailey will look at the Book Box door, which has been reported as being “wonky”

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

- a) Village Green Lawn Treatment 08.03.25  
Noted.
- b) Race Night – 29.03.25  
Cllrs Taylor and Williams will meet to make further plans. More tickets need to be sold. Cllrs Taylor, Williams and Marchant will be at the event.
- c) May Day – 03.05.25  
Noted.
- d) Offham Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting – 09.05.24  
Planning has gone well.
- e) Offham Society Lazy Jazz in Cosgrave Field - 13.07.25  
Noted.

**10. OPEN FORUM – Public Participation Session**

- o Some responsible dog owners have complained about dog mess on the Green along one side. It seems someone walks their dog at night, but leaves the mess for other walkers to collect in the morning.
- o Damage to a sign on Teston Road before the Quarry has been reported

- o The writing on the Quintain stone has turned green.

**11. 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 Steer. There were no budget issues to report.
- b) To consider and approve invoice payments

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
	<b>Payments Approved at the last meeting</b>	£1,687.19
	<b>Payments Approved since the last meeting</b>	
Unity Trust	Monthly Service Charge Current Account	£6.00
	<b>TOTAL FEBRUARY PAYMENTS</b>	<b>£1,693.19</b>
	<b>Payments approved at the meeting</b>	
Clerk	March 2025 Salary	£1,015.31
HMRC	March 2025 PAYE and NI	£352.40
Clerk	Travel, Office Expenses, Reimbursements	£186.43
	<b>TOTAL MARCH PAYMENTS</b>	<b>1,554.14</b>
	<b>Internal Transfers</b>	
Current Account	Savings Account	£1,500.00

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

- c) To consider Donations 2024-2025  
The Clerk will circulate details of recent donations.
- d) The Pensions Regulator: workplace pensions re-enrolment  
The Clerk is dealing with this.

**12. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

The next monthly meeting will be held on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025** at 7.30pm in The Village Hall  
The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed .....

Dated .....