

**MINUTES OF THE OTHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 8 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.45 PM
IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Persons Present: Cllrs Kevin Hipkins (Chairman); Val Moon; Jenny Hollingsworth; Teresa Irving – RFO/Clerk; Cllr Gary Cooke (KCC); 3 Residents/Members of the VH Committee.

1. **APOLOGIES:** The following apologies were noted & accepted: Cllrs Sally Christodoulou- holiday, Mick Read- safeguarding, Gordon Newton – conflicting appointment & Clint Hickmott – work commitment.
- 2 **NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS** – The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for the purpose of minuting.
- 3 **CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS:** No new applicants to report.
- 4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None declared.
- 5 **CRIME REPORT & POLICING UPDATE:** Crimes reported via e-watch.co.

Broadclough Way on 3 October between 00.01 and 23.59 on 3 October. Somebody tried to break into a vehicle parked in the road.

Sutton Road on 16 November between 22.10 and 22.35. Somebody tried to break into a residential property.

Church Road between 19.50 and 20.22 on Monday 20 November. Somebody damaged plant machinery.

Stacksteads Place between 09.00 and 15.55 on Wednesday 22 November. Somebody stole a recently delivered parcel from a doorstep.

Dawe Gardens between 22.00 on Tuesday 26 December and 01.00 on Wednesday 27 December. Somebody stole an electric bicycle from the road.

Gore Court Road on Friday 5 January around 17.35. Somebody threw an egg at a Volvo that was being driven down the road.

In addition to the above, it was noted that anti-social behaviour incidents have taken place in the woods.

- 6 **ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised.

The meeting reconvened.

7 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2023:

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings & were duly signed by Councillor Hipkins

8 RECEIVE BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT: Not available.

9 RECEIVE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:

- Councillor Cooke is trying to rearrange traffic work that has been scheduled to take place at the same time for Willington Street & Leeds village, but neither of the utilities seem keen to change the date.
- £12K has been raised for the Young Carers charity.
- All available money is being spent on repairing pot holes. However, the real problem is caused by the utility companies that dig up the roads and fail to repair them in a satisfactory manner.

10 VILLAGE GREEN: It was noted with thanks that the Stone Shop has again cleaned the War Memorial, on a free of charge basis. It was also noted that future repairs are anticipated to be in the sum of £20K: this includes a new Bethersden marble cross (agenda item for March).

Following an annual inspection by The Play Inspection Co, a few minor points were noted for monitoring/consideration. If possible, a local company to be sought to carry out the repairs – see also Item 15.1.

ACTION: Clerk

- **Car Park/Signage Update.** Clerk to order the previously agreed signage and arrange for installation **RESOLVED.** Cllr Hipkins is awaiting contact from Savills to establish what will be required as part of the agreement i.e. tidying up the area?

ACTION: Cllr Hipkins

Following a recent enquiry, it was confirmed that overnight parking will not be possible.

11 FINANCE

11.1 Approve Statement of Account:

		<u>FINANCIAL REPORT</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>05.01.24</u>	
					<u>Current Account</u> <u>Business Reserve</u>
Balance b/f					225,517.63 114,161.46
		<u>Expenses - current Account</u>			
		<u>Name</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	
		Play Insp Company	Annual Inspection	201.00	
		Staffing costs	Payroll - November	1,174.45	
		Bank charges	November	3.85	
		Bank charges	December	4.55	
Chq unpresented		KALC	Training (SG)	60.00	
"	"	Spectulise	Website charges	100.00	
"	"	Staffing costs	December	1,277.90	
					2,821.75

		222,695.88	114,161.46
<u>Receipts</u>			
MBC	Parish Services	780.84	
Interest received	Nov		186.71
Interest received	Dec		229.66
Transfers	IN/OUT	-85,000.00	85,000.00
Net position as at	05.01.24	<u>138,476.72</u>	<u>199,577.83</u>
Bank statement	05.01.24	<u>139,914.62</u>	<u>199,577.83</u>
	diff (unpresented chqs)	-1,437.90	0.00
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	Current Acct	138,526.72	
	Business Acct	199,577.83	
	Total	338,104.55	
		-	
	Less Total Remaining CIL	288,089.76	
	PC Funds	50,014.79	

Approval of the above was proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

11.2 2024/25 Budget Proposal/Agree Precept: It was proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded by Cllr Moon and unanimously agreed to accept the proposal from the Finance Committee's and maintain the current band D charge. This will generate a precept of £29,692.00 for 2024/25 with no change in the parish element of the council tax for residents. **RESOLVED**

11.3 Consider Banking Arrangements: Unity Bank/Investment Arrangements. It was proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded by Cllr Moon and unanimously agreed to open a current account with Unity Bank. Initially £85k to be transferred in line with the bank guarantee. The sum to be invested in a suitable account will be reviewed at the March PC meeting. **RESOLVED**

ACTION: Clerk

11.4 Consider Action Plan/Financial Assistance Request for The Institute (Village Hall) as per email 20.12.23: Following a detailed report from the VH committee it was **RESOLVED** to fund a donation in accordance with LGA S19 – Miscellaneous Provisions: Power to provide and equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or recreational objectives. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to finance electrical work in the sum of £834.40 and £100 for professional cleaning of the hall.

Following an offer from Cllr Cooke to fund decorating costs in the sum of £2,000, it was

agreed to use the previously agreed funding of £2,166 - see OPC minutes 11.09.23 Item 11.3 – towards utility expenses. An initial £1,000 payment to be made, with further funding considered, as required.

It was noted that the VH Committee has applied for an outside grant to refit the kitchen.

Cllr Hipkins to obtain further information re viability of using the hall as a coffee shop, or similar. **ACTION: Cllr Hipkins**

It was suggested that more frequent VH meetings will need to be held, possibly monthly.

- 11.5 Consider Solar Panels for The Institute (Village Hall):** Clerk to request and circulate information, as discussed. **ACTION: Clerk**

- 11.6 Other Matters to Report:** None.

12 CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS: RECEIVED/GRANTED:

The Glebe – PROW. Mrs Gray is putting together a pack of evidence to demonstrate that this route has been used for generations, in the hope that KCC will designate it a Public Right of Way.

TPO Update

Applications Refused:

23/5041382/TPOA Tree Preservation Order: The Glebe

New Applications:

23/505432 – Land West of Church Road.

Advertisement consent for 10 no flag poles, 1 x v board sign, 1 x post mounted sign and 1 x single aspect sign.

Following discussion, Clerk to register the PCs objection as per item 'E' of the Planning Consultation Response Sheet.

13 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

- **Update Re Green Hill.** Cllr Hickmott was not available to update the PC regarding ownership. However, it was noted that the verge damage has been filled by Highways and 6 new verge markers installed.
- Review HIP Meeting of 18 November '23. Following the meeting with Highways and DPC, it was again noted that very few traffic calming options are suitable for Otham. However, one option could be a virtual traffic hump(s). To be requested on the HIP **RESOLVED**

White lines were discussed but dismissed, due to the condition of the existing lines. It is understood that Highways are responsible for repainting the lines, rather than Otham Parish Council. Councillor Cooke volunteered to check and confirm. **ACTION: Cllr Cooke**

Concerns were raised in regard of the hedge on the right-hand side, when exiting Parsonage Place, as this restricts visibility.

14 TRAFFIC CALMING/SPEEDWATCH:

The results of the recent traffic survey were reviewed. Due to the road closure when the previous survey took place, Clerk to confirm the request for another survey. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was noted that the 30-mph highway sign on Church Road has been moved by 211 metres in a southerly direction to the entrance to Squerryes Oast.

15 CIL PROJECTS: The original project suggestions were reviewed.

It was noted that no further contact has been received from Rumwood Cricket Club

Following a report by Cllr Moon as a trustee of the Allotment Committee, it was agreed to consider funding for perimeter fencing of the allotments, pending further information of costs etc.

ACTION: Cllr Moon

15.1 Consider New Projects.

- New play equipment quotations to be obtained for consideration. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Meeting to be arranged with Bearsted FC to see if there is an interest in sharing facilities. **ACTION: Cllr Hipkins**

16 CONSIDER EMERGENCY PLAN: Clerk to recirculate information regarding training and preparation of a plan. **ACTION: Clerk**

17 RAGSTONE: It was agreed to delay a Ragstone until further Village Hall information is available.

18 REVIEW OF CHRISTMAS EVENTS: BWRCG were congratulated on the woodland event. However, Cllr Read was not available to provide a full report.
OPC Christmas Meal: A very good meal was enjoyed at The Plough.

19 CONSIDER EVENT TO MARK 80th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY LANDINGS DURING WWII (JUNE 6 2024): A community fish and chips supper in the Village Hall to be explored further at 11 March meeting.

20 RECEIVE REPORT OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- Cllr Read attended a meeting with Helen Whately MP on 8 December '23, when there were two presentations:

- The first was from Maidstone Borough regarding the "Relief Road". They explained that the next '5 year plan' should be signed off early this year. Work will then begin on the next plan and it is their intention that the relief road will form part of this.

The current thinking is that the road will go from the A20 near the Mercure Hotel, run west of the current villages and join the A274 at the point where it turns south (between New Rd and Horseshoes Lane). It will form a 50m corridor allowing for two wide lanes. The road would form part of the South Maidstone network, providing an employment hub, new housing and accompanying infrastructure. The term 'new villages' was mentioned, that would access the new road.

The proposal is that future CIL monies will be help to fund the project.

If this goes ahead, work expected to start in approximately 10 years time.

- The second briefing was from Matthew Scott, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, with the main focus being on the local Community Safety Units. The headline was that recruitment of the PC's to replace the PCSO's is ongoing (currently around 50%) and expected to be completed around the end of summer.

23 MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AT 11 March MEETING:

- 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings – Fish & Chips in the Village Hall
- Ragstone
- Emergency Plan
- CIL Projects
- War Memorial

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held at 7.45 pm on Monday, 11 March 2024 in the Village Hall.

Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for the agenda.