

**INUTES OF THE OTHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 9 JANUARY 2023 AT 7.45 PM
IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllrs Kevin Hipkins; Jenny Hollingsworth; Val Moon; Mick Read; Teresa Irving – Clerk; 6 Members of the Public.

- 1 APOLOGIES:** Cllr Clint Hickmott – Holiday.
The apology and reason for absence was noted and accepted.

Apology subsequently received from Cllr Gordon Newton due to becoming unwell.
- 2 NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS** – The meeting was recorded for the purpose of minuting.
- 3 CO- OPTION OF COUNCILLORS:** A resident has expressed an interest in the vacancy but was not present at the meeting.
- 4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None declared.
- 5 CRIME REPORT & POLICING UPDATE:** Crimes reported on e-watch.co.
Sutton Road on Friday 16 December between 00.01 and 23.59. Somebody broke into a new build property and stole appliances.

PCSO Kirsty Greaves is now deployed elsewhere. Details of replacement PCSO awaited.
- 6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC** (if applicable) in accordance with Standing Orders 3f, the period of time designated for public participation at meeting shall not exceed 10 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

No questions were raised.
- 7 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2022:**
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:** Not available.
- 10 VILLAGE GREEN:**
 - **Car Park Review/Update of Requested Information:** Mr Boyd-Howell has kindly agreed to permit parking behind the farmyard sheds, for a trial period. Cllr Hipkins to discuss

signage with Mr Boyd-Howell and report back to OPC's March meeting.

ACTION: Cllr Hipkins

In view of the above, it was agreed that a final decision to provide parking spaces on the green will be postponed indefinitely. Information to be shared with the community via The Ragstone etc as soon as the full details are agreed.

- **Play Equipment Inspection/Consider Training for Councillor(s)/Clerk:** Inspection training has been arranged by E. Farleigh PC for an approx. cost of £70 per candidate (depending on the take-up). It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Hipkins and the Clerk will apply for the training course.

ACTION: Cllr Hipkins/Clerk

- **Consider quotations following Survey of Trees:** Following consideration of the quotations received, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quote from The Living Forest in the sum of £1,376 + VAT.

11 FINANCE

11.1 Approve Statement of Account:

Cheques Issued

Cornish Forestry Products	BWRCG CIL Grant	5,530.80
Staffing Costs	Payroll/Expenses – November	1,437.78
Staffing Costs	Payroll- December	732.06
Spectulise	Website	100.00
T. Irving	Expenses (Dec)	37.12

Receipt

HMRC	VAT Refund	1,343.48
NatWest	Interest	6.08

Balance of Current Account: £240,256.06 credit, after all cheques sent/rec'd

Balance of Business Reserve Account: £4,933.68

Total Funds: £245,189.74

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

- 11.2 2023/24 Budget Proposals/Set Precept:** The proposals put forward by the Finance Committee were duly considered. Acceptance to request a precept of £27,075.00 was proposed by Cllr Moon, seconded by Cllr Hipkins and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.** This will mean an increase of £5,265.00 in total funding, with no change in the parish element for residents.

- 11.3 Consider Village Hall Grant Request:** Due to a shortfall in the funds required for redecoration & refurbishment, a further £3,967 has been requested from CIL funding. Following a detailed report of the VH financial situation, it was unanimously agreed to increase the funding by the requested amount. **RESOLVED.**

It was agreed that once the refurbishment is complete, it will be essential that the facilities are advertised – complete with parking - to ensure that the hall is viable in the future.

- 11.4 Review Investment Account re CIL monies:** Clerk to establish if/which building societies offer dual signatories with a higher interest rate. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 11.5 Update of Signatories (Remove/Add new):** Clerk to obtain forms to remove out of date signatories and replace with Cllr Jenny Hollingsworth. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 11.6 NatWest – Cessation of Safe Custody/Consider Safe Keeping of Documents:** NatWest will cease to offer safe custody of documents from 29 March. Cllr Hipkins and Clerk to retrieve the documentation and confirm when collected. Clerk to hold the documents until otherwise agreed. **ACTION: Cllr Hipkins/Clerk**
- 11.7 Other Matters to Report:** None.

12 CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS: RECEIVED/GRANTED:

Land West of Church Road Otham Kent ME15 8SB

Erection of walls adjacent to site entrances contrary to planning approval.

Maidstone Borough Council has completed their initial investigations and will be writing to the developers before deciding on whether enforcement action is appropriate in this case.

Applications Pending:

22/504326/LBC – Synyards, Otham Street.

Additional comments.

Developer to be requested to push back fencing at the entrance to Pentecost Lane as it is 'bulging out onto the carriageway again'. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was noted that numerous advertising boards are displayed on the Sutton Road.

Developer to be requested to reduce the number of boards. **ACTION: Clerk**

- 13 MBC BOUNDARY REVIEW – Community Governance Review Parishes (2022) consultation (Closure 29th January 2023).** No comments to be submitted.

14 CIL PROJECTS: Including Defibrillator/PROW Map:

Defibrillator: It was indicated by those present from the VH Committee that they are willing for a defibrillator to be located on an outside wall of the building. A location for a second unit to be considered.

Quotations to be sought for defibrillators x 2 with heated cabinets. **ACTION: Clerk**

Parish PROW Map. Following consideration of the quotations (in which contractors advised the minimum requirement is to replace the oak frame at a cost of £500), it was proposed and seconded to accept the quotation from H & P Works for a completely new board in pressure treated soft wood for the sum of £475 + VAT. **RESOLVED**

It agreed that finding a new location for the board on the village green will be delegated to Cllr Hipkins.

ACTION: Cllr Hipkins

The Project Manager of KCC's Highway Improvements has helped to move forward a traffic calming proposal and has agreed to finance the project. Two locations in Otham Street will have 'SLOW' painted on the road.

- 15 REVIEW OF CHRISTMAS EVENTS:** Maidstone Rock Choir performed at the BWRCG. However, the very short notice for the timing of the event meant that very few from OPC were available. Cllr Jenny Hollingsworth helped the group to set up, before having to leave for a previously arranged commitment.
- 16 ELECTIONS 2023:** Otham is up for election on 4 May 2023. Due to MBC's boundary review, elections will also take place in 2024.
- 17 CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE:** Throughout the sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project.

Information was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting regarding the process.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to sign the pledge. This is carried out online, with a certificate produced to be signed at the next full council meeting.

Training to be carried out, as appropriate.

- 18 RECEIVE REPORT OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS ATTENDED:** The Clerk attended the SLCC Christmas gathering on 8 December.

It was noted that the 3 monthly meeting with Bellway Homes is due to take place on Wednesday, 18 January.

- 19 URGENT MATTERS:** None raised.
- 20 CLERK'S REPORT:** No additional items to report.
- 21 AGREE TIME/DATE OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 24 April at 7.30 pm.**
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL - Monday, 15 May at 7.30 pm.
- 22 RECEIVE CORRESPONDENCE:** Various correspondence circulated by email for consideration.
- 23 ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED:** None.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

The next meeting will be held at 7.45 pm on Monday, 13 March 2023 in the Village Hall.
Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for the agenda.