

**MINUTES OF THE OTHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY, 14 MARCH 2022 AT 7.45 PM  
IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllrs Rachel Gray (Vice Chairman); Val Moon; Clint Hickmott; Heather Drake; Kinga Stallwood; Gordon Newton; Teresa Irving – Clerk; Cllr Gary Cooke (KCC); 19 Members of the Public.

In the absence of Councillor Hipkins, the meeting was chaired by Cllr Rachel Gray.

- 1 APOLOGIES:** Cllrs Kevin Hipkins – Health related; Cllr Mark Ramsey – family/personal commitment.

The apologies were noted and accepted.

- 2 NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS** – The Clerk for the purpose of the minutes.

- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Councillor Drake re Item 12 – VG Car Park.

- 4 COUNCILLOR VACANCY/CO-OPTION:** Two members of the public have expressed an interest in the vacancy, both of whom circulated information to support their application. It was agreed to co-opt Michael Read at this meeting as he was the first person to make contact, and a second co-option will take place at May's meeting (as it understood that there will be another vacancy - see item 22).

An Acceptance of Office was signed by Councillor Read with DPI and Co-option Forms to follow within the stipulated 28 days.

- 5 CRIME REPORT & POLICING UPDATE:** Report obtained from e-watch.co.

- 16.01.22 At around 20.20 in Honey Lane. A group of young people throwing stones at a vehicle parked in the road. No damage was caused.

PSCO Greaves is now on maternity leave, with temporary cover provided by PCSO Anna Hick.

- 6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:**

Several questions were raised with regards to the proposal for a car park on the village green with regards to the number of spaces, whether trees will be damaged, why it is required, where the money will come from, etc? Alternative suggestions for a car park were also made.

Residents were reminded that all comments that have been submitted as part of the consultation have been read and will be considered.

It was agreed to bring the following item forward due to the interest expressed by members of the public.

**12 VILLAGE GREEN:**

- Car Park: Review Consultation & Decide the Way Forward  
31 Responses have been received in response to the 500 copies of the Ragstone in which the proposal was outlined.  
It was stressed that it is necessary to weigh up community needs versus community feelings/what might be considered as harmful to the green.

The intention would be to allow access for residents, rather than attracting those from further afield.

Following a lengthy discussion, in which a vote did not prove conclusive, the Clerk was requested to seek procedural advice/recommendations from MBC with regards to the consultation and the different views that have been expressed.  
**ACTION: Clerk**

- 7 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2022:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings & were duly signed by Councillor Gray.
- 8 RECEIVE BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT:** No report, but Cllr Newton commented that the change of boundaries proposal would mean that Otham and Downswood will be separated.
- 9 RECEIVE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Cllr Cooke highlighted two consultations that are available online:
- Subsidised buses (Rural bus service). A consultation is taking place regarding cost savings.
  - Library Service. There are currently 12 districts and 99 libraries.  
A new strategy is being considered review is being carried out due to a big take up in the virtual service.
  - A lot of time and thought is going into the situation in Ukraine.
  - Children with special needs requiring home to school transport have been failed.  
The Leader of KCC has been spoken to and changes are expected.
  - A pot hole blitz will start in the spring. Pot holes can be reported via KCC's website.

**10 FINANCE.**

**10.1 Approve Statement of Account:**

**Cheques issued:**

Smart Print	Ragstone Printing	119.94
Staffing Costs (Payroll and Expenses)	January & February	1,123.28
NatWest	Safe Custody Hold	25.00
The Institute Otham	Hire of Village Hall	250.00

**Cheques received:**

NatWest	Interest	0.12
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**Balance of Current Account: £131,934.15 credit, after all cheques sent/rec'd**

**Balance of Business Reserve Account: £4,923.06**

**Total Funds: £135,904.39**

Approval of the above was proposed, seconded unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

- 10.2 Banking Provider Update:** Information was previously circulated for consideration of: Monzo, Revolut and Unity Banks.

Following discussion, the Clerk was requested to make enquires with Metro Bank.

**Action: Clerk**

- 10.3 Review of Clerk's Hours/SCP.** It was agreed to move this item to the end of the meeting and discuss in a closed session.

- 10.4 Village Hall Grant Request.** Quotations have been sought for various items by the VH Committee but these have not been forthcoming. It was stated that the existing committee are all volunteers and they are struggling to manage as they do not have the time that's required to seek grants, quotations, etc.

Outgoings are only just covered by income from the pre-school.

It was suggested that the VH committee could advertise for help via social media to see if others in the community will be prepared to help and become involved with the running.

A breakdown to be sent to the Clerk prior to the May meeting, stating how many children that attend the pre-school are from Otham and how many come from other parishes.

The request for the parish council to take ownership and management of the VH will be an agenda item and considered at the 9 May meeting.

A copy of the constitution was given to the Clerk for circulation.

- 10.5 Consider Membership Subscription: SLCC.** It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to contribute 1/3 of the Clerk's membership cost (DPC has agreed to contribute 2/3 of the cost). **RESOLVED.**

**10.6 Donation Requests:**

**St Nicholas Church** – A donation towards the upkeep of the churchyard of £150 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**

**Bicknor Wood Community Group** – A request for a donation in the sum of £1,200 to finance restrictors for the footpaths was discussed. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that this will be financed as a grant from CIL monies. **RESOLVED.**

It was agreed that Councillor Hickmott will represent OPC at future meetings of the Bicknor Wood Group.

**ACTION: Cllr Hickmott**

**10.7 Agree Donation Budget 2022/23.** A budget of £200 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**

**10.8 Asset Register:** A draft proposal was circulated prior to the meeting. Following consideration, it was proposed, seconded and duly agreed to adopt the document. **RESOLVED**

**10.9 Consider Adoption of Financial Regulations:** Following a review of the document prior to the meeting, it was proposed, seconded and agreed to adopt the document. **RESOLVED.** It was noted that some modifications will be required in the near future.

**10.10 Other Matters to Report:** No further matters.

**11 CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS: RECEIVED/GRANTED:**  
**Applications Received:**

**22/500298/SUB – Land West of Church Road.**

Submission of Details to Discharge Condition 27 – Lighting for streets and houses subject to 19/506182/FULL

Following discussion, it was agreed to object to the application as it goes against para 127 of the NPPF. The lighting will also be contrary to Chapter 8 of Otham's Neighbourhood Plan which states that 'Otham is a dark village, with only 4 streetlights in White Horse Lane' and goes on to state that 'in the 2015 village survey, 81% of residents were satisfied with dark lanes and stated that further lighting is not required.' Hence, policy BE4 states that 'Lighting associated with new housing developments, if demonstrated to be essential, should minimise the visual impact on historic buildings.

**Permission Granted**

21/506715/LBC The Old Rectory, Church Road.

21/503538 SUB – Land West of Church Road

Councillor Newton made the Council aware of a proposed development of retirement bungalows & 1 apartment block for Honey Lane which would link Belts Wood to Bicknor Wood. (Planning permission has not yet been sought for this development). The proposal also features a village hall and parking.

**12 VILLAGE GREEN:**

(Car Park Review – moved forward to between Items 6 and 7).

- **\*Tree Report.**
- **Grass Cutting Quotation:** Following due consideration, acceptance of the quotation from Paul Waring dated 24 January, 2022 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**
- **Additional Plaque for Memorial Bench:** It was agreed to allow the request for a small, additional plaque in the memory of Alfie Shrubb (to be added to the Mills family bench).

**13 \*UPDATE RE. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID/ASSET(S) OF COMMUNITY VALUE:**

**14 \*FLOODING – WHITE HORSE LANE & MOTE PARK:**

**15 \*PARISH VEGETATION/HEDGE CUTTING:**

**16 FIBRE BROADBAND UPDATE:** A letter was received from KCC in which they disputed the claims from BT Openreach that KCC: '.....has not directed Openreach to connect specific properties as indicated'.

Extracts from the KCC letter include:

'To date, Kent County Council has been working with Building Digital UK (BDUK) to roll out the national superfast broadband programme across Kent.'

'Unfortunately, BDUK will not be able to provide more specific timescales and information until this procurement work has been completed and a provisional rollout plan is in place.'

It is felt that the Council has tried their best to help with this matter but they can go no further at present.

**17 CONSIDER COMMUNITY FACILITIES STUDY UPDATE:** Comments were agreed for submission to MBC in response to the draft document.

**18 \*RECEIVE REPORT OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS ATTENDED:**

**19 NOTICE BOARDS:** Bellway Homes has agreed to provide 3 Notice Boards: 1 x Bicknor Wood, 1 x The Coppice & 1 x Parsonage Place. 12 x A4 Double fronted boards to be requested.

**20 DATE FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING/ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING:** The following dates were subsequently agreed: Monday 25 April and Monday 9 May respectively at 7.30 pm.

**21 URGENT MATTERS:** Non reported.

**22 RECEIVE CORRESPONDENCE:** Various correspondence circulated by email.

- \*Downsmail
- Resignation received from Councillor Heather Lunney.

**23 \*BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW:**

The following item was held in a closed session (the Clerk left the meeting):

**10.3** The Clerk was advised that her hours will be increased to 10 per week as from 1 March 2022 & the SCP uplifted to SCP 17 from 1 April 2022. Councillors also requested that the SCP is reviewed annually.

**\*Items deferred until 9 May meeting.**

**ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED AT NEXT MEETING ON 9 MAY 2022:**

Items that were deferred at the March meeting and Management of Otham Village Hall.

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

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.25 pm.