



Chair: Cllr Toby Acton
Clerk: Bonnie Jones | Ware Farm, The Street, High Roding, CM6 1NT |
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High Ongar Parish Council Meeting
held on
Wednesday 10th January 2024 - at 7.30pm
at the High Ongar Village Hall

MINUTES

Present:

Cllr Toby Acton (Chairman), Cllr John Catlin, Cllr John Tory, Cllr Simon Bosworth, Cllr Chris Funnell, Cllr Steven Smith and Cllr Gordon Arthur.

Bonnie Jones (Clerk)
Susan Deluca (previous locum Clerk)
District Councillor Ray Balcombe
4 members of the public

2023/24.23 Apologies for Absence
Apologies received from Cllr Claudio Gallicchio.

2023/24.24 Other Absences
None

2023/24.25 Declarations of Interest.
None

2023/24.26 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Cllr Arthur advised that the previous minutes for November showed him as being present, advising this was an error as he had given his apologies. The Clerk confirmed that the minutes for November would be changed accordingly.

2023/24.27 Public Participation Session
PC Warren Shepherd was present and gave a brief report which included the 2023 crime statistics for High Ongar.

One member of the public asked if any update had been received in regard to the previously discussed Sunak Restaurant. The previous locum Clerk advised that no update had been received, however she believes environmental services are continuing to monitor the situation. District Cllr Ray Balcombe confirmed he would look into this matter.

A second member of the public asked if the Council was aware who is responsible for maintaining the Princess Diana's Garden. The previous locum Clerk confirmed that she believed either District or County council was completing small amounts of work on this each year. She confirmed that Councillors are continuing to monitor it.

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The previous locum Clerk read out an email received by a member of the public who felt that there was not enough publicity surrounding the Over 65's Christmas lunch that was held in the village hall. In the email the resident confirmed that he would be very interested in becoming a Councillor and would like to be considered for co-option. The previous locum Clerk advised that as Councillor elections will be held in May she did not feel appropriate for his co-option to be considered. Councillors discussed this matter in detail, and it was agreed not to co-opt, but to wait until the elections later this year.

2023/24.28 Reports and Members Reports

a) Chairman's Report – None

b) Vice Chairman's Report - None

c) District & County Councillors Reports – District Cllr Ray Balcombe gave a brief report where he gave an update on potholes in the area, fly tipping and waste collections. Cllr Acton advised that the potholes that had been filled in High Ongar are now back to their previous state.

d) Parish Councillors:

- Ward Councillor Report – Paslow Common - None

- Ward Councillor Report - High Ongar - None

- Ward Councillor Report- Norton Mandeville - None

e) Highways Report – Cllr Smith raised the issue of advertising signs that are on the A414, which is blocking drivers view. The previous locum Clerk confirmed she would contact Highways to request the signs be removed. Cllr Funnell also raised that the hedge along Mill Lane is severely overgrown which is causing danger to drivers. The Clerk confirmed she would re-report this.

f) Village Hall – Cllr Funnell advised he had received various outstanding bills from ADT and their solicitors. The Village Hall have now paid this bill however requested if the Parish Council would refund this. Councillors unanimously agreed to pay the Village Hall £539.23 to cover the ADT payment.

2023/24.29 Clerk's Report

The Clerk gave a verbal report which included the following matters:

- The Clerk has contacted Pinny Talfourd Solicitors to request information on the process of registering the Gamers land and the cost.
- Clear Business has confirmed that the account is now closed.
- The Clerk is currently in the process of gaining access to the bank.
- It has been confirmed that a joint storage between the School and the Parish Council will not be funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund, after EFDC advised they would not fund any educational facility. The Clerk however is still in the process of negotiating funding for the Village Hall.
- The Epping Forest District Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) consultation was previously discussed, where councillors agreed that they required more information as to the definition of publicly accessible land. The Clerk has received the following response from the Senior Environment Officer:
“The definition of Publicly accessible land is public or private land to which the public or patrons have a reasonable expectation of relatively unrestricted access.”

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This would mean that the PSPO would cover private land which there is a reasonable expectation of unrestricted access, this would for instance include people's front gardens, pub car parks/ beer gardens etc."

2023/24.30 Clerk's monthly salary

This item was moved to close session.

2023/24.31 Funding for play equipment

The Clerk has received confirmation from Epping Forest District Council that they would like to offer the Parish Council £100,000 to put towards a play area. This would be funded by the UK Shared Prosperity fund. Councillors discussed this in great detail and confirmed that the only suitable place for a Play Area to be located is the green at Millfield, however Councillors felt that before any funding could be accepted that they would need to understand what future maintenance costs this would incur. Councillors agreed that they would like to accept the money in principle however would need to investigate who owns the land and how much the play area would cost to maintain. The Clerk confirmed that an agenda item would be included in the February agenda where Councillors can look at all information received and make a final decision as to whether they would like to accept the funding.

2023/24.32 CCLA savings account

All Councillors agreed that they wish to place as maximum amount as possible as funds would allow in a CCLA savings account. The Clerk confirmed she would start the process of opening an account.

2023/24.33 Delegated Powers - Planning

The Parish Council, as a statutory consultee, is afforded 21 days to consider and comment on planning applications. There may be times when this 21 day deadline period falls outside off the normal Parish Council meeting. In this instance, it is normal for smaller councils to agree delegated powers to the Clerk to allow her to obtain comments on planning applications from individual Councillors and formulate a majority view comment to submit to EFDC. It was proposed by Cllr Acton and Seconded by Cllr Smith to give the Clerk delegated powers in this regard.

Cllr Arthur advised that a report was published by Epping Forest District Council detailing plans for 8 houses recommended for approval by District Council planning officers – located at the corner of Millfield and Mill Lane. It details that no comments had been made by High Ongar Parish Council. The previous locum Clerk advised that this planning application was discussed in 2018, and that a comment was recorded within the minutes, however it seemed the comment was never sent to District Council. The previous locum Clerk confirmed that she would be attending Plans East Committee to give the Parish Councils comments.

2023/24.34 Budget and Precept

Councillors considered in detail the Budget and Precept for 2024/2025. Councillors considered the current levels of earmarked reserves, which were agreed mid-way through 2023 with an understanding that they would need to be amended. Councillors discussed this matter and agreed the following level of earmarked reserves:

Specific Earmarked Funds

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S/Lights	£8,000
Bus Shelt	£8,000
Seating	£415
Elections	£2,000
Vandalism	£500
Defib	£1,500
Open Spc	£2,000
HOVH	£10,000
IT/Comp	£1,500
Poss Playground	£2,000
Total	
Earmarked	£35,915

This would leave around £15,000 in the General Reserves fund.

A number of specific items were considered, with the following being agreed:

- New Village Sign – no suitable Parish Council owned land in the village to locate this and agreed not to move forward with this.
- Annual Christmas meal for residents – Agreed up to £600, with the suggestion of a maximum of 25 attendees, organised by the Parish Council. These monies to come from general reserves.
- New Notice Board at Mill Lane – It was agreed not to move forward with this.
- Parking Signs – It was agreed not to move forward with this as it would be unenforceable.

Councillors went through the proposed budget line by line, with a number of alterations made. It was agreed that there wouldn't be any specific amount budgeted for the High Ongar Village Hall, given there was £10,000 held in the earmarked reserves, but agreed that this earmarked fund could be used for specific projects or maintenance to be agreed by Council in the coming year given by way of a grant to the hall. In a separate note it was confirmed that as Custodian Trustees, the Parish Council owned the land on which the village hall sits, however the Charity owns the hall.

Councillors noted The Tax Base for 2024/2025 is 618.40, and there was some discussion as to how this was calculated, with the Clerk confirming this was calculated by EFDC. Councillors discussed that the precept had not been increased for the past 5 years, which was generally not good practice, and Cllr Acton proposed an increase of 16.7%, equating to roughly 3% for each year. This was seconded, and it was agreed to set the precept for 2024/2025 at £13,362. This represents a 16.7% increase in the Parish Council element of the Council tax, meaning a Band D property would be paying £21.60 a year – an annual increase of £3.09 on the current year. Unanimous agreed.

The final agreed budget was as follows:

	2024/2025
EXPENDITURE	
Audit	400.00
Clerks Mileage	100.00
Computer Maint / Software	1,000.00
Hall Hire	300.00
Internet & Website	500.00

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Gen Admin / Post / Stationery	100.00
Training	750.00
Use of Office	312.00
Subscriptions	500.00
Clerk Salary	6,000.00
Insurance	350.00
Dog Waste Collection	350.00
Grass Cutting	1,500.00
Legal Powers (misc Exp)	500.00
Street Light Electricity & Maint	700.00
Additional Item - Christmas Lunch	600.00
Total	13,962.00
INCOME	
PRECEPT	13,362.00
GRANTS	0.00
Other	0.00
VAT Ret	0.00
Total	13,362.00

2023/24.35 Planning applications for consideration

Councillors considered the following planning applications:

Reference	Address	Description	Update
EPF/2393/23	Former Larkins Farm, 199 Nine Ashes Road, High Ongar, Ongar, CM4 0JY	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3'Biodiveristy Enhancement plan' condition 14 'Tree Protection Plan, Arboriculture Method Statement' and condition 19 'Construction Method Statement for Biodiversity' on planning application EPF/2601/18 (Demolition of an existing structure and replacement with 2 x detached dwellings with associated new vehicle crossover, garages, landscaping and other associated works)	Consultation deadline: 11/12/2023
No Comments.			

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EPF/2403/23	199, Former Larkins Farm, Nine Ashes Road, High Ongar, Ongar, CM4 0JY	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 'EVCP', condition 18 'External Lighting -Bats', and condition 20 'Super-Fast Broadband' on planning application EPF/2601/18 (Demolition of an existing structure and replacement with 2 x detached dwellings with associated new vehicle crossover, garages, landscaping and other associated works)	Consultation deadline: 11/12/2023
No Comments.			
EPF/2292/23	Paslow Common Farm, Nine Ashes Road, High Ongar, Ongar, Ingatestone, CM4 0JY	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 15 'Surface Water Drainage Strategy' on planning permission EPF/1597/21 (Redevelopment of commercial site to provide 9no. dwellings with associated access, hardstanding, landscaping and parking)	Consultation deadline: 11/12/2023
No Comments.			
EPF/0006/24	Mulberry House, Chelmsford Road, High Ongar, Ongar, CM5 9NL	TPO/EPF/14/11 (Ref: T2, T13 & T14) T2, T4 - Ash - Monolith, as specified. T3: Ash - Selective limb reduction, as specified	26/01/2024
No Comments.			
EPF/2745/23	2 Prospect Villas, Norton Heath Road Old A414, High Ongar, Ingatestone, CM4 0LQ	Certificate of lawful development for an extension to existing cottage to form ancillary accommodation for a family member and is similar in style to outbuildings in the immediate area.	24/01/2024 For noting no comment
No Comments.			

2023/24.36 Planning Updates

Councillors noted the planning updates included in the spreadsheet attached to the agenda.

2023/24.37 Finance

37.1 The Clerk noted the bank reconciliation will be given at the February meeting.

37.2 The following payments were agreed:

Payee	Description	Method	£ (inc VAT)
Heath Computers	Microsoft 365 and maintenance Inv 4843	Online	£80.00
Heath Computers	Microsoft 365 and maintenance Inv 4870	Online	£80.00
TBS Hygiene Ltd	Dog waste collection Inv 4669	Online	£29.28
TBS Hygiene Ltd	Dog waste collection Inv 4791	Online	£36.60
Clear Business	Outstanding balance and termination fee	Online (PAID)	£456.92
Thornwood Grounds Maintenance	Removal of metal sign – November	Online	£30.00
Defib Store Ltd	Battery and spare pads	Online	£325.20
Walkers Catering Ltd	Lunch for 20 (Christmas lunch)	Online	£400.00
Susan Deluca	Locum Clerk – 4 month salary	Online	£1,937.52

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37.3 Councillors noted the below income:

Payee	Description	Method	£ (inc VAT)
Pinney Talfourd Solicitors	Overpayment refund	Income	£475.20

2023/24.38 Outstanding Matters

- Defibrillator training event – The Clerk confirmed that she has sent out invites to neighbouring Councils.
- Village hall funding – The Clerk confirmed she is currently in the process of obtaining funding for the Village Hall.

2023/24.39 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday the 21st February.

2023/24.40 Exclusion of the public and the press

The Chairman proposed that the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed. This was unanimously agreed and the public and press were excluded from the meeting.

2023/24.41 Clerk's monthly salary

Councillors confirmed the Clerk would be paid on the last working day of the month.

Meeting end: 22:25