

# Ongar

Town Council

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## Agenda

### TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

You are hereby summoned to the meeting of the Full Council to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 commencing at 8 P.M. at the Council Offices, Bansons Way CM5 9AS. The press and public are welcome to attend.

S DeLuca  
Susan De Luca  
Locum Clerk

#### **01/24 Declaration of acceptance of office of Members of Committees**

Members who were elected on to Town Council Committees to sign their Declarations.

#### **02/24 Those present and apologies for absence**

**Motion.** The council to record and accept apologies for absence.

#### **03/24 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members of the Council are subject to paragraphs 6 (DPIs), 7 (Other Pecuniary Interests) and 8 (non-pecuniary interests) of that Code. Members are also subject to paragraphs 9-11 of that Code as regards declaration of interests and participation in the meeting insofar as any item of business involves such an interest.

#### **04/24 Public participation**

To receive any representations from members of the public. The maximum time allowed for this item is 15 minutes. A member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes.

#### **05/24 Correspondence**

- **Zebra crossing at Coopers Hill** - (Cllr Vaz has requested that this item be on the agenda at the last meeting and will give a further update)
- **Notifications from Epping Forest District Council Re General Elections** – Locum Clerk confirms relative Notices are being placed on Notice Boards
- **CCTV** – Email from Local Resident – Members are asked to Note that the Chairman has asked that this item be discussed as a separate Item on the Agenda

- **Email from Ongar Primary** – The Locum Clerk received an email from Ongar Primary Regarding non receipt of determination of grant application. *In the interest of transparency, the locum clerk has reproduced the correspondence in full in the main body of the agenda (without personal names).* The Clerk has responded to this email. A copy of the enquiry and the locum clerk’s response is reproduced below for Members information:

**From:** Ongar Primary Committee

**Subject:** AGM Meeting - Grant application rejection

Dear Town Clerk

Please can you forward the following onto the councillors ahead of tonight’s AGM meeting.

I am the Chair person of the PTA (known as the Ongar Primary Committee) for Ongar Primary School.

We submitted a claim for a grant of up to £500 on the 5th March 2024. We have received no official response to confirm whether the claim was successful or not. We did however read an article in the Ongar News that it had been turned down because the OTC were not clear who had made the claim.

With the application, we submitted the OPC constitution, the financial details of our bank account plus details on how we raise money for the school. In our opinion, the application was very clear that it was from a PTA and not directly from the school.

We find it quite upsetting that we have received no official response from the OTC. The OPC are residents of Ongar, and our children attend Ongar Primary. We have dedicated our time and effort to raise money for all children that go to the school and were quite shocked that it had been turned down, given that another school in the area were awarded a considerable size of money a while back.

We are now considering applying for the capital grant and hope that you are now fully aware that we are a PTA known as Ongar Primary Committee.

Kind Regards, Ongar Primary Committee

Locum Clerks Response

Thank you for your email on behalf of the Ongar Primary Committee.

Firstly, I would like to explain what I believe are the circumstances as to why you were not formally advised of the outcome of your grant application.

Unfortunately, Mike Letch the long serving Locum Clerk to the Town Council sadly passed way at the beginning of 2024. This meant that the Town Council were sadly lacking in staffing resources for a few months (and unfortunately still are until a permanent replacement can be procured).

The application you refer to was discussed at a Town Council Meeting, where a lengthy discussion took place, however after looking at the minutes, this is not fully reflected in the narrative, but is in the decision, but I have spoken to some councillors who were in attendance. The grant was turned down; however, the minutes do not fully reflect the conversations that were had surrounding the application. It is my understanding that ward councillors who are in attendance at meetings would normally be able to pass on more information to you or may

have been able to have advised as to the reason why the response had been delayed.

I also note you state that another school had been in receipt of grant funding in the past. I would like to advise that all grant applications are looked at individually, and on each and their own merit.

I do hope this has explained the situation for you.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards, Locum Clerk.

Members are now asked how they wish to move forward on this matter.

#### **06/24 Consultations**

#### **07/24 Reports**

**-Chairmans Report**

**-Town Councillors Reports and for those that attend on committees on behalf of the town council.**

**-District and County Councillors**

To receive a five-minute report from District and County Councillors on matters relating to Ongar.

#### **08/24 Police matters**

#### **09/24 To agree the Full Council meeting minutes of 16 May 24**

**Motion.** The minutes of the Full Council Meeting are approved as a true record. Members are asked to NOTE amendment necessary.

#### **10/24 Finance reporting**

- a. To receive a summary of receipts and payments up to the end of May 2024.
- b. To receive a list of budgetary information on all accounts.

**Motion.** The Council notes the draft budgetary information and confirms that the account balance agrees with the reconciliation of £26054.37

#### **11/24 Approval or 2023/2024 Accounts**

To **APPROVE** the Accounts for 2023/2024 as attached to the agenda

#### **12/24 Internal Audit 2023/2024**

To **NOTE** the Internal Audit was completed on 12<sup>th</sup> June, and the **NOTE** the content of the report

#### **13/24 External Audit (AGAR) 2023/2024**

Each year the Councils Accounts and Practices (known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - AGAR) are reviewed by an external auditor appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The following dates apply for this Council:

1. The requirement for the public inspection period (to include the first 10 working days of July) will start Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July and will end Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August.
2. The AGAR must be approved by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and submitted to PKF Littlejohn by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

This Council is subject to an Intermediate Review as part of the limited assurance review. Council is asked to:

- a) Review the effectiveness of the system of internal control of this Council
- b) Consider the findings of this review
- c) Prepare the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1)
- d) Approve the Annual Governance Statement by way of **RESOLUTION**
- e) Consider the Accounting Statements (Section 2)
- f) Approve the Accounting Statements by way of **RESOLUTION**
- g) Ensure that both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements is signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.

#### **14/24 External Audit for Year 2018-2019 - Reporting**

Members are asked to NOTE the outstanding sum of Money from the External auditor report 2018/19, has been paid and the matter has now been finalised.

On 24 September 2019, PKF Littlejohn issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2019. In that report they explained that they were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. They subsequently followed this up with documentation to show that they were in a position to certify completion of the review. The external auditors report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return required amendments as follows:

*Except for the matters reported below on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.*

- *The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review: The figures in Section 2, Boxes 10 of the prior year comparative column do not agree to the prior year final signed AGAR.*

*Other matters not affecting SAA opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:*

- *The smaller authority has not provided: an adequate explanation for the variance between the prior and current year values in Box 4*
- *The Council has received an invoice in relation to the additional work that the auditor has carried out in relation to challenge correspondence received from a member of the public.*

*External auditor certificate 2018/19*

*We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2019.*

**The above has been fully detailed in the agenda and will also be fully included in the Minutes to comply with Transparency.**

#### **15/24 External Audit – 2022-2023**

Members are advised that the Locum Clerk has now concluded the correspondence with the External Auditor in relation to a matter from the Council Year 2022-2023. A copy of that report is now detailed in the email documentation for Members perusal. Members are asked to read this documentation fully, including the instructions as to the next steps that this council has to follow, and take the necessary action.

#### **16/24 CCTV**

Members are advised that two articles have been placed in the Ongar News, one by a Member of this Councillor and one by a resident in relation to CCTV in Ongar. The Locum Clerk has responded to the Resident in relation to this matter, and a copy of the enquiry and response will be available for Members at the meeting as it has GDPR implications. However, this has prompted the Clerk to spend time looking at Ongar's CCTV provision. This includes the coverage of CCTV by cameras owned and maintained by Epping Forest District Council, and also the cameras owned and maintained by Ongar Town Council.

The situation is at the moment:

CCTV is provided by Epping Forest District Council on land/assets that they own to monitor their own Assets – Namely in the following locations it is stand alone:

Housing Developments

- Shelley Close,
- Frank Bretton House
- Car Park– Basons (Sainsburys)
- Car Park – Pleasance Car Park (Library)

OTC monitor the CCTV at the following locations, this equipment is the responsibility of OTC the initial order being placed by Councillor Mendoza:

(We have an email confirming this)

- Shelley Park
- Love Lane Recreational Centre
- Pleasance Park

What we need to look at is, whether the equipment provided by OTC, is now sufficient for OTC needs and fit for purpose. As cameras in some areas continue to be vandalised,

In Epping Forest District Council CCTV Policy, they have a Partnership Section which states:

#### ***Partnerships with Local Councils***

*As with the CCTV Consultancy section above, part of the Council's CCTV Strategy is, subject to staffing capacity, to utilise the expertise of the District Council's small CCTV Team to assist parish and local councils with both advice and support, on an "at-cost" consultancy basis, with the installation and renewal of CCTV systems on land their land and buildings in their localities. In addition, the District Council will consider requests from local councils to link their existing or future systems into the District Council's CCTV network. The District Council will also consider*

*requests from local councils to include the repair and servicing of their CCTV systems as part of the District Council's Annual Servicing Agreements. Further to this, officers will investigate opportunities to provide CCTV services on behalf of other District Council's to maximise income generation and reduce overheads.*

I have therefore made an enquiry to Epping Forest District Council to see whether or not these areas currently owned and maintained by OTC could, in the future be placed under the control of Epping Forest District Council. A meeting with Epping Forest District Council has now been arranged for mid-July for a representative to have a look at the OTC Cameras and give an assessment of what may be available.

Members are further advised that the Chairman has drawn up a response to go into Ongar News for their CONSIDERATION and are asked after taking all of the above, into account, together with the verbal comments, how they wish to move forward in this matter.

#### **17/24 Allotment Matter**

Members are advised that a Matter has come to the attention of the locum clerk where a resident has advised they have concern for their own well-being in relation to a structure being built on the allotment that is not within the Allotments Terms Rules and Regulations. Now that the Council as a Corporate Body has been alerted to this, action needs to be taken. The locum clerk has written to the allotment tenant and asked them to contact her in regard to this matter. No response was received, so a letter will now be pinned to the structure advising that the structure must be reduced in size, and if this does not happen, then the tenancy will be terminated.

#### **18/24 Coronation Benches**

The locum Clerk has received an email from a Councillor asking for details as to what the situation is with these benches. No details can be gleaned from Minutes or emails, so Members are asked if they can provide further information.

#### **19/24 Overgrown Bushes etc. in Ongar**

The locum Clerk has received requests from Councillors and residents regarding cutting and clearing of various areas. The OTC Grounds man is meeting with a representative of EFDC/Qualis during the week commencing 10th June to obtain an Overlay Map of the different areas that OTC/Epping and County are all individually responsible for. It is hoped that the map will be available for the meeting.

#### **20/24 Confidential Items**

**The Council is asked to RESOLVE to exclude the press and public from this meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following item contains confidential information relating to two staffing matters and one financial matter.**

#### **21/24 Staffing Matter**

- a) Update on staffing matters**
- b) Update on appointing a permanent clerk**
- c) Council Motor Vehicle**

**The council is asked to RESOLVE to permit the press and public to return to the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

**22/24 Items for later agendas.**

Tree on Nature Reserve\*

Chicken Coup\*

Emergency Plan

Cemetery

Jubilee Park Pavilion\*

Various Leases\*

- \*Locum Clerk is aware of these