



Minutes of a meeting of the full council Held on 19th January 2023 at the Council Offices, Bansons Way CM5 9AS.

1/23 Those present and apologies for absence.

Chair Cllr Birch

Councillors Barrell, Cole, Feetham, Freeman, Griffiths, Gunn, Pigott, Vaz.

Also present County Councillor Lee Scott until 3/23, County Councillor Jaymey McIvor,
Locum Clerk, Press Officer.

Not present. Cllr Freeman.

Resolved. The council accepts apologies for absence from Cllrs Reynolds, Shami.
Proposed Cllr Birch seconded Cllr Cole and carried unanimously.

2/23 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

There were no declarations of interest.

3/23 Public participation.

There was one member of the public present. Mr Bacon, chairman of the community sporting trust gave a summary of the history of the trust explaining how it proposed to become self-sufficient with the continuing support of the Town Council. When considering agenda item 11/23, it was the Trust's view that the Tennis Club's rent money should be paid to them and he requested that the council made a deed of dedication to transfer the tennis lease to the trust.

4/23 Project update.

Love Lane footway. Consulting with Love Lane residents on shared costs.

Playground upgrade – replacement roundabout to be specified by Wicksteed. (10/23)

Town Sign – quotes to replace like-for-like being sought.

Love Lane Office – valuation scheduled for w/c 23rd.

Correspondence:

A complaint about refuse collection was noted. (14/23)

An invitation to the High Sherriff's award was noted.

5/23 Consultations.

None this month

6/23 Reports from District and County Councillors.

To receive a briefing on Highways Matters from County Councillor Lee Scott.

Cllr Scott reported on actions taken to manage weight restriction and speed limit through Ongar High Street. He will be meeting Alex Burghart M.P. to discuss the matter on 20th. He will also be talking about a weight or size restriction that will still allow for

deliveries. Considering the speed limit, a bill is going through parliament that will give additional powers to enforce speed limits, but this must be discussed with the police. It may be part of an overall speed review in Essex.

Flood plain management. There is a proposal to build new local reservoir to relieve flooding upstream. The Clerk will contact Cllr Scott with details and request a full report. There is an enhanced enforcement team that monitors how land owners are complying with their duty to keep ditches clear. Councillors were asked to pass-on information about known problems and encouraged to look at National Rivers Authority reports.

Upgrade to the Four Wantz junction. There may not be sufficient funds to pay for the published upgrade plans. There was no speeding problem identified at the site. The Highways Panel that will report on the matter is itself currently under review.

It was confirmed that the 2023 Ride London event was approved by Essex County Council Cabinet as it gives £1m funding in youth projects. Approval is year on year with no long-term contract in place. This year the event is only one day, with much better planning and signage. More care will be taken to ensure that carers can have access when needed.

Cllr Scott noted that the Town Council does not approve of the event and would like to persuade the county to take it elsewhere as they see no perceived benefit for the town.

The Town Council is disappointed by the number, depth, and growth of potholes in the roads and pavements. They were informed that all Essex County Council Members had a quota of optional pothole repairs beyond those that are dangerous. In recognition of the problem, more money will be made available for repairs. Highways Officers regularly inspect the road, but with over 5,000 miles to cover, the assistance of residents who identify problems is appreciated.

The same support is welcomed in identifying damaged road signs. Signs that are broken, damaged, bent or turned are common.

Considering road works undertaken by utilities and developers, Essex County Council have no powers to prevent permits being granted to do discretionary work. There is no power to reclaim for damage when the work is inferior. However, Highways will be meeting with the planning authorities to establish that developers must deposit a bond that may be used to make-good damage or correct inferior workmanship.

Cllr Scott was thanked for his attendance.

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

District Cllr Vaz reported that the Epping Forest District Council Local plan is being reviewed by the inspector and should be signed-off in February.

Following the complaint about tree roots damaging a residential wall and potentially damaging the house, it has been confirmed that Essex County Council will not be taking further action.

The Road sign at High Ongar has been repaired.

He has reported a broken streetlight in the Spinney.

County Cllr McIvor reported that the Ongar bridge wall has been repaired and made safe, the potholes have been reported.

Essex County Council faces many challenges in meeting its obligations in social care while managing the impact of inflation.

The Town Council's concerns about Ride London have already been made with Cllr Scott and County Councillors believe that the event is in the best interest of Ongar residents. Cllr McIvor asks that the Town Council is seen to get behind this event to make it more of a success. He acknowledged that there were problems, but Ride London has made an effort to understand and overcome them.

7/23 Police matters.

Special Constable update

Essex Police newsletter

Rural Crime Open Day 10th March at Layer Marney Towers

8/23 To agree the Full Council meeting minutes of 15th December 2022

Resolved. The minutes of the Full Council Meeting are approved as a true record. Proposed Cllr Mendoza seconded Cllr Piggott and carried unanimously by those then present.

9/23 Finance reporting.

- a. The council received a list of all payments up to the end of December 2022.
- b. The council received a list of budgetary information on all accounts.

Resolved. The Council notes the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance £93,119.18 agrees with the reconciliation. Proposed Cllr Mendoza seconded Cllr Piggott and carried unanimously.

10/23 Replacement roundabout for Recreation Ground

The council noted the price of the Wicksteed Rotaweb as a replacement for the broken roundabout but wanted more options. The decision will be deferred to seek alternative quotes.

11/23 Lease with Tennis Club

Following the decision in minute 20/22 confirming that the Tennis Club rent is to be paid to the Town Council, and the proposal in minute 161/22 that the lease and rent are transferred to the Sporting Trust, the following motion was intended to clarify the Council's position.

Cllr Feetham reminded the council that the original 2016 agreement was that the lease would be assigned to the trust. However, this was before it was realised that the Tennis Club, along with the office and the scout hut were outside the scope of the trust and had to be removed from the land under Fields in Trust control. Following a discussion, it was agreed that changes had been made, but these were not understood by the councillors who wish to have the matter deferred pending further research.

Motion deferred. The Council confirms that the Tennis Club lease is with the Town Council, and it is to them that the rent shall be paid. This is effective from April 2022, and monies previously paid to the Trust will not be demanded.

12/23 Ongar Community Award.

To consider format and requirements for the 2023 community award. It was reaffirmed that the award could be made for individuals or groups and the town council are looking for nominations. Adverts will be placed in the Ongar News and on social media.

13/23 Repairs to Ongar Bridge

The matter was raised with the County Councillors who considered that the bridge repair was sound and safe. With no adverse comments from the public and objection from the District Council Conservation Officer the matter is closed.

14/23 Coronation celebrations

To consider the Council's involvement in the event.

An enhancement to the nature reserve was considered to be an appropriate commemoration, and installing benches would be practical and useful.

Resolved. The Council will purchase and install two benches made from recycled plaswood and fitted with a commemorative plaque with the price and location to be determined later. Proposed Cllr Mendoza seconded Cllr Cole and carried unanimously.

15/23 Wildlife information for Nature reserve.

To commission an information board for the nature reserve.

Cllr Cole will approach the local school asking for an illustrated map. The Clerk will ask the nature society if they are interested in designing a sign.

16/23 Ongar – Cerizay twinning event in 2023.

The civic reception is on Good Friday 7th April from 12 until 5pm at the Budworth Hall. English Wine and finger buffet catering will be funded by the Town Council and provided by the Budworth Hall catering staff at £10 per head. A montage of vintage Ongar postcards will be provided by Cllr Birch as a gift to the visitors.

17/23 Epping Forest District Council waste collection service

To consider the Town Council's response to complaints of poor service.

The contractor reports that there is a shortage of labour and is suffering from ageing equipment. Although the problems are known, the council is disappointed by the lack of corrective action and lack of communication.

18/23 Speed indicator devices.

To consider latest information on speed indicator devices and speed reduction. The matter will be deferred while a task and finish group prepare a report for the February Council meeting.

19/23 Committee membership

The Planning Committee is currently all councillors, it requires at least four with a quorum of three. It was agreed that planning will remain the responsibility of the full council with applications heard at a specially convened meeting.

The staffing committee is currently four councillors, it requires six with a quorum of four.

Resolved. Cllrs Gunn and Piggott will join Cllrs Birch, Cole, Feetham, and Reynolds on the staffing committee. Proposed Cllr Birch seconded Cllr Mendoza and carried unanimously.

20/23 Staffing Committee report.

- a. The resignation of the finance officer was noted.
- b. To consider long-term staffing requirements.

The staffing meeting considered options to replace the finance officer or bookkeeper and take the opportunity to restructure the office. The temporary appointment to cover extended holiday can be used to explore other options.

21/23 Items for the next agenda.

Review of financial regulations and standing orders.
Tennis lease
Statement of internal control.
Risk assessments.
Speed indicator devices.
Bus shelter
Bus service to ongar
Skatepark.

Meeting closed 9.58