

Ongar

Town Council



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Minutes of a meeting of the full council held at 8pm on 20th June 2024 at 8pm

Held at the Council Offices, Bansons Way CM5 9AS

01/24 Declaration of acceptance of office by Members of Committees

Councillors who were elected as Chairman or Representatives on to Committees signed their declarations of acceptance of office, thereby agreeing to abide by this Councils adopted code of conduct.

02/24 Those present and apologies for absence

Present : Cllr Gunn (Chairman), Cllr Cole (Vice Chairman) , Cllr Mendoza, Cllr Barrell, Cllr Feetham, Cllr O'Neil, Cllr Walton, Cllr Vaz and Cllr Eydmann.
Locum Clerk Susan Deluca, Bonnie Jones (Minute Clerk), District Councillor Mary Dadd*, 1 Member of the Public*

**For part of the meeting*

Apologies received from Cllr Roberts and Cllr Acornley. Proposed Cllr Walton,
Seconded Cllr Cole.

03/24 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Cole declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 17/24.

04/24 Public participation

The 1 member of the public present advised that she was attending for the discussion on agenda item 16/24. She asked if this item could be moved to the top of the agenda. The Chairman confirmed he was happy to move item 16/24 to the top of the agenda, with the agreement of Members (recorded in minutes as 5/24).

5/24 CCTV

Cllr Mendoza advised that the information included under this agenda item was not correct. He had sent an email to the Locum Clerk today where he explained the history of the Ongar CCTV. The Locum Clerk advised that she had received the email at 2pm that afternoon and had a response which she would circulate with Cllr Mendoza and all Members present, copies of this email were distributed together with her responses to all Councillors. The Clerk had also completed some detailed research into the matter, the detailed explanation of her findings were also tabled at the meeting.

A detailed discussion occurred where the below matters were raised:

- The previous Ongar CCTV system, and the legalities of this.
- Ongar Town Council Liability.
- Concern at how the OTC CCTV had been set up and monitored and its implications and public perceptions of councillors in a previous administration historically having the ability to view cctv on their personal mobile phone
- The current duplicated CCTV system.
- EFDC responsibility and 5-year safety plan.

A member of the public advised that an incident occurred with her daughter in April, and in turn a police report was made. Police had requested for the CCTV that captured the incident; however, the camera was pointing to the ground and had not captured the incident. The resident questioned if the current CCTV company hold any liability for this as OTC was not made aware of the camera. The Clerk confirmed this will be something she looks into. The resident noted she was happy that the Council was making a plan for an improved CCTV system for the future.

The Clerk advised that 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. It was agreed that the findings from this meeting will be reported at the meeting following, where Councillors can further discuss the best way to move forward with this matter.

The Chairman had drawn up a response to go in Ongar News, which was tabled at the meeting for Councillors to consider, after two amendments were made, it was agreed to proceed with this. Proposed Cllr Eydmann, Seconded Cllr Walton.

06/24 Reports

It was agreed that this matter be brought forward from later in the agenda:

District and County Councillor Report – District Councillor Dadd provided a verbal report which included the following matters:

- Future change to EFDC Planning.
- Overgrown vegetation in Ongar. Cllr Dadd advised she had a meeting with Qualis to discuss this matter and hopes to obtain an Overlay Map of the different areas that OTC/Epping and County are all individually responsible for. The Chairman highlighted the need to understand what area of land OTC are responsible for.
- Anti-social behaviour – Cllr Dadd requested that Councillors provide her with a report of any anti-social incidents that occur. She will report these incidents to EFDC.

The Locum Clerk advised Members that she had received report from Cllr Dadd Shortly before the meeting, she had circulated a hard copy to all members present. The Chairman expressed his and Members thanks to Cllr Mary Dadd for attending.

There were no other Reports from District or County Councillors.

Chairmans Report –

Cllr Jason Gunn advised Members that it gives him great pleasure to highlight the events the Town Council have organised, and he had attended over the last month:

Ride London Essex Sunday 26th May 2024

As Chairman he had the great pleasure in attending this year's Ride London Essex event, accompanied by Cllr Cole and Cllr Eydmann and was also aware that other councillors took the opportunity to attend the event.

Special thanks go to Cath Honeywell for organising the towns events with a range of community partners

It was an absolute pleasure to see Ongar residents of all ages engaged in the various activities that were provided and more importantly their support and enthusiasm for the riders and had the great pleasure in speaking to some of the riders and here is a selection of their comments:

'The town was described as enthusiastic'

The best place we have been through so far'

'Please thank the organiser for the town for putting on such an impressive welcome'

Cllr Eydmann and I also visited the security Team responsible for the safety of both the riders and the public in Budworth Hall.

Cllr Cole and I had a photo taken with Cath Honeywell the organiser of the event.

Annual Town Assembly Friday 31st May 2024

Ongar Town Council hosted the Annual Town Assembly on Friday 31st May 2024 from 7.00pm onwards in Budworth Hall. There were presentations from the following:

Town Council Report delivered by the chair of Ongar Town Council Mr Jason Gunn including a 'who does what' handout on Town, District and County Council responsibilities.

- District Councillor report from Cllr Mary Dadd
- Update on Policing matters in Ongar from PC Warren Shepard
- Ongar Community Champion information from Cath Honeywell
- Introduction and update from the new headteacher of the Ongar Academy Mr Jonathon Sands.
- Information about 3food4 you initiative in Ongar from Mr Pesh Kapasiawala (Chair of Trustees)
- A presentation from the Scout leaders and a member of the scouts.

Ongar residents were then given the opportunity to raise questions both verbally and written to the council.

Civic Awards 2024 were awarded to the following:

- William Stock – Neighbourhood Watch
- Ongar Academy
- Adam Maulin
- 3Food4U
- Ongar Scouts
- Ongar/Cerizay Twinning

After the formal proceedings, residents were then invited to partake in

refreshments and to look at the community stalls from:

- 3food4you
- Ongar Twinning
- Ongar Pétanque Club
- Ongar Crib Club
- Ongar Scouts
- And an opportunity to visit the new Ongar Museum in Budworth Hall.

There were 65 residents in attendance.

On behalf of OTC I would like to thank the Ongar Town Council Staff, residents and community partners that attended the evening to make it a huge success.

The Report and handout will be available on the website too, including the 'Who does what' document with an easy read version.

80th D Day remembrance event Thursday 6th June 2024

Ongar Town Council organised the remembrance event at the Ongar Memorial Ongar Surgery. Both the chairman and vice chair gave readings to commemorate the event with the symbolic lighting of the beacon, there were some residents in attendance.

Epping Forest District Museum - acquisition of early Medieval Gold Coins from Ongar - Thursday 13th June, 7pm - 8.30pm

I attended the private viewing with the vice chair Cllr Cole along with Cllr Roberts, Mendoza and Eydmann in attendance.

We were given two presentations related to both the acquisition of the coins and the related history. Invited guests were then given the option of holding the coins, visiting the museum displays and listening to another talk.

Cllr Cole and I had the opportunity to handle the coins.

I would like to thank Epping Forest Museum for their kind invitation and their thanks for our support as a council, it was a very interesting event. We have received an email of thanks from the museum.

- Councillor Reports – None

- Neighbourhood Plan ONPG Sub Committee – Cllr Feetham provided a brief report on what was discussed at the ONPG Sub Committee meeting. She also

advised that Mary Dadd will be stepping down as Chairman from this committee. Cllr Mendoza added that himself and Cllr Feetham may in future be Joint Chairmen of this committee. Cllr Gunn respectfully reminded that both their members interest forms would need to be amended to reflect this change.

Members have requested that they are made aware of the structure of the ONPG, and its Sub Committees and Formal Reports be given to this Council.

07/24 Correspondence

- **Zebra Crossing at Coopers Hill** – Cllr Vaz confirmed that all these works have now been completed.
- **Notifications from Epping Forest District Council Re General Elections** – Locum Clerk confirmed relative Notices are being placed on Notice Boards
- **Email from Ongar Primary** – Members had reviewed a response to the Ongar Primary, details of this organisation’s concern had been set out both in Ongar News editor and in a letter from the Ongar Primary to the Locum Clerk. The Locum Clerk had responded and explained the situation regarding the policy on grant funding allocation and the reason for the lack of a response to the Ongar Primary on this occasion. Cllr Walton asked for a small addition to the response. It was also confirmed that the Council was aware that when the application was originally discussed that the Members were aware that it was from PTA. It was therefore agreed that the response be forwarded to the Ongar News for publication. Proposer – Cllr Edymann, Seconder Cllr O’Neil, 2 Abstentions - Carried

08/24 Consultations

None

09/24 Police matters

No reports received.

10/24 To agree the Full Council meeting minutes of 16 May

Members noted the amended minutes which had been circulated however another amendment to reflect that Cllr Roberts was voted on to the Staffing Committee by secret ballot. Councillors unanimously agreed to approve the full council minutes of 16th May after the additional amendment to the amendment was made.

11/24 Finance reporting

- a. A summary of receipts and payments up to end of May 2024 was tabled at the meeting.

b. A list of budgetary information on all accounts was tabled at the meeting. Councillors noted the draft budgetary information and confirms that the account balance agrees with the reconciliation of £26,054.37.

12/24 Approval or 2023/2024 Accounts

A draft copy of the Account for 2023/2024 were tabled. Proposed by Cllr Walton that the accounts be agreed. This was seconded by Cllr Barrell. A vote was taken, and it was agreed unanimously to approve the accounts.

13/24 Internal Audit 2023/2024

The Clerk tabled a copy of the full Internal Audit report which was conducted on 11th June 2024. Councillors noted this report and its content. Members thanked the staff for all their wo undertaking all the work necessary in putting the documentation together.

14/24 External Audit (AGAR) 2023/2024

Each year the Parish Council is required to submit to an External Audit by an externally appointed Auditor. For 2023/2024 this will be PKFLittlejohn, and the Audit is known as the Limited Assurance Review. An Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be completed and approved by Council. The limited assurance review was created to provide reassurance and transparency to Local Residents. The Council therefore:

- a) Prepared the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1)
- b) Approved the Annual Governance Statement by way of resolution. Proposed Cllr Walton, Seconded Cllr O'Neil. AGREED unanimous vote.
- C) Considered the Accounting Statements (Section 2)
- d) Approved the Accounting Statements by way of resolution. Proposed Cllr Walton, Seconded Cllr Barrell. AGREED unanimous vote.
- e) Ensured that both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements was signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.

A full copy of the Audit paperwork had been tabled for members, including details of the period for the exercise of public rights. All the necessary documents will be published in accordance with the legal requirements.

15/24 External Audit for Year 2018-2019 – Reporting

Members were advised that the long-standing matter in relation to the SAA External Audit and the outstanding balance owing. A negotiated settlement had now been agreed and this council had now paid the outstanding balance owing. This matter was now closed.

16/24 External Audit – 2022-2023

The Locum Clerk had been in communications with the SAA in this matter and a conclusion had now been reached. There was an ‘Except For Matter’ found by the External Auditor which had been reported to Members at this meeting. The relevant documentation will be published, and the invoice will be paid.

17/24 Allotment Matter

Members Noted with concern the structure being built on a plot on the Allotments which was over height. The Locum Clerk advised members that she was following due process and had written an email and a subsequent handwritten letter, delivered direct to the tenant’s plot (as there is a problem with the tenants home address). If no response is received by the end of June, then further communication will be necessary to advise that the tenancy will be ended if the structure is not brought down to the size within the rules and regulations.

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. Members confirmed that this was matter was previously discussed, however no final decision was made. Councillor agreed that the 2 benches would be placed at the nature reserve. The exact placement of the benches will be agreed at a later date. The locum Clerk will investigate cost and ascertain exact location on a map.

19/24 Overgrown Bushes etc. in Ongar

This was matter was discussed in agenda item 07/24 under District Councillor Reports. The Locum Clerk is trying to arrange a meeting with Epping Forest District Council/ Qualis and the Town Council Grounds Manager to confirm ownership of areas in Ongar.

20/24 Confidential Items

As there were no public and press at the meeting, there was no need to propose the exclusion of any such individuals as a result of 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.

21/24 Staffing Matter

- a. The Locum Clerk provided an update on OTC current staffing structure.
- b. Councillors agreed that the appointment of a permanent Clerk is a matter of urgency. A draft job advertisement was tabled at the meeting. This was agreed in

principle, however it was agreed for councillors to go away and review in further detail, any amendments can be made via email by liaison with the locum Clerk.

- c. It was agreed that advice would be sought from Cllr Cole's wife regarding the leasing of a vehicle in order to understand the best way to move forward with this matter. Cllr Cole questioned if the maintenance contractor has sufficient business insurance as he is currently using his own personal vehicle. It was proposed by Cllr Mendoza that the Council should hire a van for the short term to ensure the Council and its staff member were duly covered from an insurance perspective. This was Seconded by Cllr Walton and unanimously agreed by all.

22/24 Items for later agendas.

Tree on Nature Reserve*

Chicken Coup – Check on OTC Allotment Rules and Regs

Emergency Plan

Cemetery Jubilee Park Pavilion*

Various Leases – In Hand

Meeting end 10.21pm