

Ongar

Town Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the full Town Council held on 20th February 2024 at 7pm Held at the Council Offices, Bansons Way, Ongar CM5 9AS

MINUTES

13.25 PRESENT & APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr Gunn (Chairman), Cllr Walton, Cllr Barrell, Cllr Mendoza, Cllr Eydmann, Cllr Feetham, Cllr Reay, Cllr Vaz, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Eydmann, Cllr Webb
Also Present: Debra Murray Town Clerk

Press (0), Public (0)

Apologies: Cllr Cole,

Motion. To accept the apologies given

Proposed: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Reay

Retirements: Cllr O'Neill has retired from the council along with Cllr Acornley.

Proposed: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell

Apologies received from District Councillor Dadd.

14.25 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Motion: To **AGREE** the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 16th January 2025

Resolved: The Minutes of the Full Town Council are approved a true record of 16th January 2025

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann **Seconded:** Cllr Reay **Carried:** unanimously

Motion: To **AGREE** the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting Held on 10th December 2024

The Councillors discussed the meeting minutes and whether the minutes were a true record of what was said in the meeting. Other areas will be picked up later in the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann **Seconded:** Cllr Roberts **Abstained:** Cllr Walton, Cllr Mendoza,
Against: Cllr Feetham

Cllr Mendoza did not vote as he believes the meeting on 10th December 24 was illegal

15.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16.25 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None Present.

17.25 CLERKS REPORT/CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence

1. A Consultation has commenced on the removal of the streetlight at Moreton Road for the affected neighbours and runs until 28th February.
2. Further to the last Full council meeting, I understand points were raised regarding trees in Love Lane. After the request by the resident to cut back the tree, I am seeking quotations and at the same time I am trying to confirm the ownership of the tree.
3. I have placed in the Councillors folder the EALC Partnership Announcement regarding VE Day 80 for 8th May 2025
4. I met with Jessica Pruett from EFDC for a walk around of our CCTV. And will detail in full under point 25.25
5. Working with Councillor Eydmann this month I have submitted an application for a grant from the Police Fire Crime Commissioner as per previous discussions in council meetings.
6. Residents have complained regarding the rubbish left outside 'Puzzlez', I contacted the owner who stated a skip would be in place by the end of last week, having walked past on Monday I can confirm the skip is in place and rubbish has been placed into the skip.
7. Another resident complained that the dog bin at Longfields keeps having too much waste and it is being left on the ground, I have implemented a second emptying of the bin each week.
8. I have received complaints from the residents following the refurbishments of the public toilets, the doors were replaced on male and female toilets however, there was an issue with the nib, unfortunately since then the doors have an issue with the locks on the male toilets with the electronic locks. With regards to the female toilets the door has been vandalised, and it is now bent. EFDC has requested the contractor attend site within 2 weeks hopefully the male toilets will be remedied quickly but the female toilets will need a new door to be made. The refurbishments of the inside of the toilets will be planned once the toilets doors are rectified.
9. I attended a meeting with Cllr Gunn of the Twinning Association for an update on the 40th anniversary. I have subsequently confirmed that the coins cannot be replicated in time, so we need to consider another gift. However, the museum has said that it may be possible to use the coins to show them as part of the OTC reception on Good Friday at the Ongar Academy and then return them back to the museum. To be advised how this will work.
10. Budworth Hall Clock - I contacted the clock engineers who advised me there were no dates recorded for last 3 years of service dates as Budworth Hall, whilst speaking to

them they advised the call out fee to attend the clock would be £250 speaking to the engineer he stated if the Budworth Hall caretaker called him he would be able to ask him to carry out a few procedures and at which point it may eliminate the problem. We currently have £20 in our budget for the clock as we budget for the annual service of the clock.

11. I have had contact from East of England co-ordinator for the Defibrillator, he has stated that it is still missing. Although he has tried to find out where it is he has been unsuccessful. He also stated he would approach the trust to see if they would be willing to supply the town with a replacement however he felt this was unlikely as the defibrillator was over 10 years old.
12. Zip wire at the nature reserve – Having contacted the resident’s son and he is clearing out the house and will remove the Harris fencing and the wire.
13. Email from V Fund regarding the purchase of land at Ongar Bridge which is the lorry park he has enquired if the council would discuss releasing the covenant on the land? The two documents from Land Registry are in the Councillors folder.

Training undertaken this month none, dates are confirmed from March for Website training, and EALC courses with the CiLCA training commencing in June for the Town Clerk.

18.25 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

-Chairmans Report

Chairman attends ‘May 2025 Festival’ – Briefing Meeting

I attended a Briefing meeting organised by Cath Honeywell (Ongar Community Champion) and Kelly Stone on Monday 27th January 2025 in the council offices at 7.00pm this meeting was booked in December 2024. This was to give an update on the draft plans for the May festival 2025. It was a pleasure to be invited and meet with both local businesses and organisations in our Ongar community in this valuable engagement. I have sent a letter of thanks from the office of the chairman.

Cllrs attend ‘Bugsy Malone’ production at the Ongar Academy

Both Cllr Eydmann and I were invited to see the production on Friday 31st January 2025 at the Ongar Academy on behalf of the town council. We would like to express thanks and congratulations to both the students and staff for a wonderful performance. I have sent a letter of thanks from the office of the chairman.

Request for Chairman to Contact resident with regards to the defibrillator in the telephone box in Ongar High Street

At the request of a resident via the town clerk for me to personally contact them, further to the information given in the clerk's report in the January full town council meeting on 16th January 2025. I wrote an email, which was verified by the clerk to ensure that this followed the Town Council communication procedures, to give my personal condolences to the loss of their loved one on behalf of the town council and to reassure them that we would investigate this for her, this has been reported in the clerks report on item **17.25** on this evenings agenda.

Meeting with Bob Gammon (Chair of the Ongar and District Twinning Association) and Sheila Spring

I met with both Bob Gammon, Sheila Spring and the town clerk with regards to this year's Twinning event in Ongar. This was to look at our involvement as a council and receive an update on the Easter Weekends activities. I would like to thank them both for their time. This will be explained in more detail under item **18.25** on this evening's agenda.

Cemetery Management and Compliance course (ICCM)

Cllr Cole and I attended and completed the Cemetery Management Course run by the ICCM on both the 28th and 29th January 2024.

Essex Police - Epping and Ongar Community Policing Team 'Let's Talk' 2025 & EFDC Warm Spaces in Ongar

I completed an Action Request forms for this years 'let's talk' events run by Essex Police and information for our residents on warm spaces in Ongar, these are now on the Town Council website.

KAVS Ceremony with The Lord Lieutenant of Essex on Tues 10th June 5.30pm-9pm

I have received an email invitation on Friday 13th February 2025 from Mr Pesh Kapasiawala , Chair of Trustees 3FOOD4U to the KAVS Ceremony with The Lord Lieutenant of Essex on Tues 10th June 5.30pm-9pm with drinks reception/canapes/light buffet at Mulberry House, Chelmsford Rd, High Ongar where they will also be celebrating the charities 5th Anniversary.

I have accepted this kind invitation on behalf of Ongar Town Council.

Meeting with Cath Honeywell on Monday 17th February with the Town clerk – second monthly update

At the request of Cath Honeywell, I met with her virtually, so that she could give me an update on the May 2025 festival, details of which are a document sent to the clerk for all councillors to read. She has requested joining the March Full Town council meeting to give further updates as both her and [Wesley Tierney](#), the manager at EOR, as they are working together on both the festival and the 160th anniversary of the Ongar–Epping line. Two areas which were highlighted in this meeting to consider in future meetings are as follows:

- A window competition organised by the Ongar Town Council for the May event like the Christmas window competition.
- A military parade as part of our annual remembrance Sunday service

Meeting with Hugh and Joe From the Ongar Arts Society

The clerk and I met with Hugh and Joe at 6.00pm this evening from the Ongar arts society this evening to discuss the possibility of somebody from the organisation to be commissioned to produce this year's town council gift to the Twinning group from France this will be discussed on the second supplementary agenda item 32.24.

Articles submitted for the February Edition of The Ongar News:

- **Chairman attends 'May 2025 Festival' – Briefing Meeting**
- **CLLrs attend 'Bugsy Malone' production at the Ongar Academy**
- **Community Engagement with Ongar Town Council**
- **How to get in contact with Ongar Town Council**

-Town Councillors Reports

Cllr Feetham & Cllr Mendoza attended a ONPG meeting on the 27th January 2025. Cllr Feetham reported that they had discussed updates on both the new developments and highways issues.

Cllr Mendoza was asked if he an update on the bus stops following the September 24th 2024 Town Council meeting as recorded in the minutes, Cllr Mendoza stated that some correspondence had come into Council such as advertising at the bus stops and timetable changes.

The Chairman asked Cllr Feetham to report back on a Bus meeting which has been discussed in a previous meeting with no updates.

Cllr Eydmann reported on 40th Twinning Anniversary visit on 18th – 21st April. Events are planned each day, and that Councillors are welcome to attend the events over the weekend. Cllr Eydmann advised that some of the events will not be free, and that admission fees and catering costs would need to be self-funded.

Cllr Eydmann informed councillors that he would be sending out an email to all members so that they could if they wished sign up to events.

Cllr Walton report on the following large developments being planned for Ongar

R2 – Full Plan expected March/April

R5 – Approved the previous evening by EFDC

R6 – Under consultation

R8 – Being consulted on waiting to go before the EFDC Planning Committee

R9 – Shelley Regeneration has already been submitted

The meeting with District Councillor Whitbread is to be scheduled when his PA is back from leave.

-District and County Councillors

Reports received from District Councillors – None Received

19.25 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance reporting

- Members noted the receipts and payments up to the end of January 2025
- Members noted the list of budgetary information on all accounts

Motion: To approve receipts & payments up to the end of January 2025

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann Seconded: Cllr Roberts Carried Unanimously

20.25 Police Report

A report has been submitted and Noted from PC Shepherd. The following report was read out to councillors by the town clerk:

Ongar Town Council Report

Crime stats for last 3mth period:

Stats for period 10/11/24 to 10/02/25

199 calls to police, of these calls 111 crimes were recorded. Of those 111 crimes the following are crimes considered to have an impact on community:

0 Residential Burglaries
0 Attempted Residential Burglary
0 Residential Burglaries of Unconnected Buildings (garage or shed break in etc)
7 Theft of Motor Vehicle
3 Theft from Motor Vehicles
0 Vehicle Interference (Trying Car Door Handles etc)

Stats for period 10/11/23 to 10/02/24 to compare.

199 calls to police, of these calls 133 crimes were recorded. Of those 133 crimes the following are crimes considered to have an impact on community:

4 Residential Burglaries
4 Attempted Residential Burglary
0 Residential Burglaries of Unconnected Buildings (garage or shed break in etc)
10 Theft of Motor Vehicle
4 Theft from Motor Vehicles
1 Vehicle Interference (Trying Car Door Handles etc)

As you can see from the stats, we have received the same number of calls to police, but crime has reduced by 16.5%. There have been no burglaries for this 3mth period which is great and a 33.3% reduction in vehicle related crime.

Unfortunately, no alternative Police Officer is available to attend the meetings in place of PC Shepherd.

21.25 Removal of Notice Board in Library Car Park

To **Agree** whether or not it would be possible to remove the notice board in the library car park due to concerns for safety of the Town Council staff.

Motion: To remove the Notice Board in the Library car park.

Proposed: Cllr Walton **Seconded:** Cllr Reay **Carried:** unanimously

22.25 To approve the Combines Inspection and Testing of all streetlights, the quotation is for £2,625 for our 91 streetlights. Following discussions, councillors requested the clerk to speak to another electrical company to clarify the frequency that the inspection should be carried out and if they find fault what will happen.

Councillors **AGREED** to defer to the next meeting to allow the clerk to obtain further information.

23.25 To APPROVE Internal Auditors for 2024/25 accounts

Councillors **AGREED** to use Heelis & Lodge for 2024/25 accounts

Proposed: Cllr Mendoza **Seconded:** Cllr Walton **Carried:** Unanimously

24.25 To APPROVE the Lease for the Love Lane Offices

Councillors discussed the lease and agreed to **DEFER** to the next meeting so that councillors would be able to look at the new lease revisions.

25.25 To **AGREE** the date for the private meeting to review the Jubilee Park Lease as per item 112.24 November 2024 Meeting of the Full Town Council.

Councillors **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** a date for a closed meeting to discuss the Jubilee Park Lease which will be held on 13th March 2025.

Proposed: Cllr Walton **Seconded:** Cllr Reay **Against:** Cllr Feetham

26.25 CCTV

The Chairman introduced this item by firstly acknowledging that there had been a typo error on the original agenda which was currently 'To consider and agree to suspend standing orders', when it should have read 'To consider and agree to suspend Financial Regulations 11(h), this change in text would therefore require a motion to be voted on. He then went on to say that if council agreed to follow one route which would be to ratify the decision for EFDC to take over the ownership of the existing CCTV cameras the following steps would need to take place:

- To propose a motion to amend the agenda from suspending standing orders to suspending financial regulations 11(h)
- To propose a motion to consider and agree to suspend financial regulations 11 (H) so that the council would not need to obtain further quotes
- To propose a motion to then Consider and agree that EFDC take over the ownership of the existing OTC cameras so that they could be updated along with the infrastructure.

On the 24th September 2025, the CCTV was discussed with the then locum clerk who was going to investigate the CCTV, it was the intention that this would be reported back in the Full Town Council November Meeting, however it was not.

This was then moved to an extraordinary meeting held on the 10th December 2024, where it was discussed in detail to EFDC taking over this service. This meeting was called as the provider (ONSITE), at the time had served a 7-day notice period on the contract which would leave OTC without a provider. In a previous meeting 29th September 2024, council had agreed to apply for the Police Fire Crime Commissioner grant, which if successful with matched funding from the council would pay for the majority of the necessary upgrades, however as the council had been served the 7 day notice, it was then agreed to use the general reserves to fund this and look at alternatives to still apply for the grant. . In this meeting we also talked about the checks and balances that would have been carried out by EFDC what we didn't do as a council which was pointed out was that in a meeting, we did not agree to suspend our financial regulations for us to do that one off commissioning.

And in addition to this we did not put a specific motion forward for EFDC would take over the contract, we had discussions about it and it was agreed but without going through those two processes first. The Chairman said that before we discuss this we need to remedy the situation as councillors may have different views on this. He explained that there were two different options to look at one option was that we go down the route of suspending our financial regulations in order to go with EFDC which we agreed in the December extraordinary meeting to go with EFDC, the alternative would be another motion which is put to the council on whether we go with EFDC for this or we decide not to suspend the standing orders and we ask the clerk to get two other quotes. In the meantime, councillors need to be aware that this will extend the period of time without the CCTV coverage. It will also mean that in the meantime we have paid out for a deposit for this, and we will also have to come up with a rationale of what we want covered on, that it was discussed in the meeting that the current suggestion of using EFDC and the detail of what we were getting was very reasonable under that cover. He said that I think we need to have a very open discussion about this and then decide what motion we may put forward.

Cllr Mendonza - stated the clerk should get some advice from EALC as he felt that we had not followed financial regulations, he said we don't even know what we have got as they are still discussing this'. He also said, We have paid out £10,500 obviously we are going to finish up paying for this new CCTV system and we are going to have EFDC running it but he thought

what we need to do is make sure that we have the T's crossed and the I's dotted otherwise the auditor will turn around and say that we are wrong. The clerk agreed that she would take this action forward.

The Chairman - stated that the clerk has taken advice from an experienced clerk who is also an approved EALC trainer and that retrospectively we can suspend the financial regulations, and we can vote on awarding EFDC the contract. If this process was followed the auditor would see that we have both retrospectively suspended the regulations and agreed to award the contract with EFDC.

Cllr Mendoza then said that this is 'closing the gate after the horse has bolted', we have paid £10,500 in January, in February we have discussing where we are going to put the CCTV and one of the places, we did have cameras has been omitted, the old council offices? He expressed again that we needed advice before agreeing to it. Once again, the clerk noted the comments from Cllr Mendoza and agreed to investigate this further with EALC's legal team.

The Chairman stated that this is why the clerk had investigated to find out that there is an avenue we could pursue which is legal to retrospectively suspend our financial regulations and retrospectively we can put this to a vote this evening that contract be awarded to EFDC.

Cllr Mendoza also stated that we are not following our financial regulations on the IT system.

The Chairman reminded Cllr Mendoza that we were not discussing this at this meeting as there was not an agenda item for it.

Cllr Mendoza then went on to say that he was concerned what the residents would say about OTC ignoring their own financial regulations. He felt that we would get to the stage where we will carry on with it but he didn't want the auditors raising concerns in our report. Cllr Mendoza was then informed again that the clerk would take further advice from EALC.

Cllr Reay asked a question with regards to our financial regulations stating that we need to get 3 quotes. The Chairman explained that as a council we can suspend that clause.

Cllr Eydmann said that he was in agreement with Cllr Mendoza but his recollection was slightly different to how he has reported it. He was unclear on whether it was the June or July meeting when we were discussing it. He expressed his view that we knew the amount that was being quoted, and we were going for grant funding and that would appear on the minutes that had not been correctly recorded. And that is the gap that we are quite rightly trying to address, so that an auditor would take one look and see that everything was in order. Cllr Eydmann suggested that provided that we are confident that the advice we have been given is correct and gives us that level of assurance then his recommendation would be to follow the procedures outlined by the chair. He also said that it was inevitable that as EFDC gets under the skin of the system of it we should prepare ourselves for the fact that there would be nuances & discrepancies in addition to more to this system than we think. In principle, he said that he just wanted to get to a point where the decision is transparent and above board and will withstand scrutiny.

The Clerk explained to council that this was the advice that she had sought to proceed with to remedy the situation.

Cllr Walton asked where the advice had been sought from. The clerk explained that this had come from Adriana Jones, a qualified CILCA clerk with years of experience and an EALC trainer. Cllr Mendoza again asked for legal advice from EALC, the clerk agreed again that she would seek this.

Cllr Feetham expressed concerns about the agenda item being worded incorrectly. She then went on to state what was on the agenda and felt that we could not withdraw that. She stated that the whole of this is incorrect, these are legal documents, and it was wrong. It is important a document is forever.

Cllr Walton remarked on Cllr Feetham's comments and said that the minutes would reflect the changes made as a result of this error and that this would suffice. Cllr Feetham then replied with the same statement of the agenda being wrong.

The Chairman then reminded Cllr Feetham that at the beginning of the meeting that if we decided to go down the route of suspending financial regulations that we would need to a vote to change the wording of the original item on the agenda first, followed by the vote on the decision to suspend the financial regulations. Despite this reiteration, Cllr Feetham spoke over the chair and then expressed that if residents went on the website that would see that the item was wrong. Cllr Eydmann then explained to Cllr Feetham that any changes and amendments voted on would be reflected in the minutes from this meeting. Cllr Feetham again said that the agenda had been issued incorrectly. Cllr Eydmann explained to Cllr Feetham that it is a common occurrence in government practice that occasional errors are made on agendas, and that as a result, it is accepted practice for amendments to agendas to be agreed through a vote. Cllr Feetham cut off Cllr Eydmann by saying that it was not common practice. Cllr Eydmann then gave examples of where this has happened on many occasions in his experience with numerous other councils. Despite this, Cllr Feetham did not accept the legitimacy of voting on an agenda amendment in the meeting. Cllr Feetham then raised her voice and insisted that the agenda was not correct and could not be amended, continuing to reiterate what she had previously said on poor standards of practice, and that we could not carry on with the agenda item

The Clerk then informed the chairman that she could not continue in the meeting and left the council chamber.

The Chairman then stopped the meeting as the clerk had removed herself from the chamber and confirmed that the meeting would not continue without the clerk present.

27.24 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

In the event that the agenda contains Exempt (pink) pages.

There were NO items to be considered

28.24 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Emergency Plan

Various Leases*

Disability Access – Look at Lease and Contact EFDC*

Revised Grant Guidance Form and Amount

VE Day Activity on the actual day Thursday 8th May

Twinning

- **Clerk is aware of these**

Meeting closed at 22:14