

Ongar

Town Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the full Town Council held on 20th March 2024 at 8pm Held at the Council Offices, Bansons Way, Ongar CM5 9AS

MINUTES

27.25 PRESENT & APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr Gunn (Chairman), Cllr Cole, Cllr Walton, Cllr Barrell, Cllr Mendoza, Cllr Eydmann, Cllr Vaz, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Webb

Apologies: Cllr Reay, Cllr Feetham

Also Present: Debra Murray Town Clerk

Press: 1 Public: (4)

Motion. To accept the apologies given

Proposed: Cllr Cole **Seconded:** Cllr Roberts **Carried:** Unanimous

Apologies: from District Councillor Dadd

28.25 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Motion: To **AGREE** the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on the 20th February 2025

Resolved: The Minutes of the Full Town Council were approved as a true record of the meeting held on the 20th February 2025

Proposed: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimous

29.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

30.25 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

31.25 VE Day Update Presentation

Unfortunately, Cath Honeywell was unable to attend the meeting at the last minute. The Clerk informed the Councillors that the updated planning document which had been produced was in their folder for their attention.

32.25 CLERKS REPORT

The Councillors **NOTED** the report of the Clerk.

33.25 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

-Chairmans Report

Chairman and clerk meet with resident with regards to Love Lane Road

At the request of a resident to meet with the chairman, both the town clerk and the chairman arranged a meeting on Monday 10th March. The resident produced a document about the road in Love Lane from the Jubilee Sports Trust as the secretary of the trust. The chairman reminded the resident that council had requested that any correspondence must come from the chair of the trust in the November 2024 meeting. The resident asked if they could send this to them just endorsed by the chairman of the trust and the chair said that it would have to come as a request from the chairman only. The resident was reminded that they were only there in their capacity as resident and was asked if they had been approached by the 4 residents in the road about the repairs, both he and the clerk had not. This will be discussed under agenda item **48.25.**

Chairman meets with Alex Burghart MP

At the request of the MP a meeting took place on Friday 14th March in the Town council offices with his PA in attendance. This informal meeting was about how the town council can engage more with our local MP who has offered to be of assistance to us and was very supportive of the work we do. A photograph of the chairman and MP was taken outside the Town Council Offices.

Weekly Meetings with the Town Clerk

I have continued to have weekly meetings with the Town Clerk, to look at progress, updates and discussions with regards to the clerk's agenda. She has and continues to work tirelessly to ensure that we are compliant with relevant legislation. She is also working through some of the historic motions which were not previously carried out for the council to make progress. As we approach the next few months for both the internal audit and AGAR, there are items on this evening's agenda which will aim to adhere to policy and practice and recommendations made by last year's auditor. These measures are about making this Town Council ready for audit and compliance.

Mastering Year End: Less Stress, More Success!

I attended the online free scribe training for end of year and AGAR yesterday, I would suggest that councillors who are interested in free training to look out for courses. They record the training if you wish to look at this later.

Our principles

May I remind all councillors of the code of conduct that we sign up to when we start as councillors and that we follow the Nolan principles that require dignity and respect for each

other including our Town Clerk. Can I also remind councillors that if they wish to participate in a discussion that they must raise their hand, this includes when a councillor may wish to come back to another councillor's comments. The Good Councillors Guide for 2024 is available as a reminder.

Articles submitted for the April Edition of The Ongar News:

Information for Ongar News – April 2025

As we are now approaching spring it is an ideal time to let you know about some of the developments and future aspirations that the Town Council are focussing on for our residents.

Cemetery and St Martins

Our ground staff have been working tirelessly on improving both our cemetery and St Martins Church grounds and hedgerows. On behalf of the town council, we would like to thank them for the improvements made for our residents' areas.

Coming soon....

- Holding a reception for the annual town twinning event on Friday 18th April 2025 (Good Friday), at the Ongar academy, this year is a milestone in terms of this initiative marking the 40th Anniversary of our friends from Cerizay travelling to Ongar. We will be hosting a reception along with speeches and a gift to our Cerizay friends on behalf of the Town Council.
- Setting a date for our annual town assembly so that we can report on the council activities over the past year, this will include opportunities for clubs and societies to show case their activities by having a stall and inviting community partners to speak as part of the event, an opportunity for all our residents to attend. More information regarding this will be published shortly.
- Producing our annual town report for all our residents to look at both engagement and achievement over the last year.
- During the Town council meeting in January looking at both our 2025/26 Budget and precept discussions, the town council will be looking at producing a strategic development plan. This will of course be done in conjunction with both our residents community partners.

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

Cllr Mendoza stated during an informal meeting with District Councillor Dadd that they will be trying to resurrect the Shelley Residents Association.

Cllr Eydmann gave an update on the Twinning events planned for Easter weekend and urged other councillors to attend.

Cllr Walton following the planning and environmental meeting confirmed that OTC will be supporting the petition for the Four Wantz bus stop.

-District and County Councillors

District/County Councillor Jaymey McIvor gave a report to the Council following his residence surgery where parking around The Shackletons had been brought to his attention and discussed this issue along with fly tipping in the area. He then gave a personal update on the proposed devolution plans and expressed that he wanted to bring this to the council attention. He urged both the council and residents to ask questions with regards to the current devolution plans. He expressed concerns about how the council would work post devolution referring to both vulnerable adults and children in care settings, having previously been a portfolio holder for this at Essex County Councillor.

District Councillor Dadd had sent a report into the clerk which councillors noted in both the Planning and Environment committee too as this was a similar report.

34.25 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance reporting

Finance reporting

- Members agreed with the list of budgetary information on cashbook 1 account
Proposed: Cllr Eydmann **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously
- Members agreed with the list of budgetary information on cashbook 2 account
Proposed: Cllr Barrell **Seconded:** Cllr Eydmann **Carried:** Unanimously
- Members agreed with the list of budgetary information on cashbook 3 account
Proposed: Cllr Barrell **Seconded:** Cllr Webb **Carried:** Unanimously

The chairman asked councillors if they would mind if they brought forward the item 57.25 from the supplementary agenda forward as representatives were present. All councillors agreed to this suggestion.

57.25 GRANT APPLICATION

Councillors discussed the grant application from the Ongar Pétanque club.

The councillors were shown photographs of the work already undertaken by the pétanque club and are looking for a grant to assist with the lighting of the area. A representative from Ongar Pétanque gave a 3-minute verbal presentation on the submitted grant with Q&A from councillors. An in-depth discussion regarding what the grant was going to be used for was undertaken. Councillors agreed to support the application with the following motion.

Motion: To support the pétanque club with a grant of £1,650

Proposer: Cllr Walton **Seconded:** Cllr Mendoza **Carried:** unanimously

35.25 POLICE REPORT

Councillors noted the report from PC Shepherd.

36.25 40th Anniversary Twinning Gift and Reception

Cllrs discussed both the proposed gift for the 40th Anniversary Twinning gift from Ongar Town Council to Cerizay and the reception to be held on 18th April 2025. An update was given on the plans for the reception on 18th April 25.

Motion 1: To fund the 40th Twinning Anniversary gift costing £450 for a commissioned painting from one of the members of the Ongar Art Society.

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

Motion 2: To fund the reception buffet on 18th April 2025 for the 40th Twinning Anniversary.

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

37.25 Bank Account Request for Allotment Deposits

Councillors discussed the requirement of a new bank account for the deposits of the allotment monies.

Motion: To open a new separate bank account for the allotment deposits to be held.

Proposed: Cllr Walton **Seconded:** Cllr Roberts Cllrs Cole and Gunn requested if this could be added as a pecuniary interest? Yes

38.25 Annual Town Assembly Meeting

Councillors discussed the proposed date for the Annual Town Assembly Meeting and agreed the format of the event.

Motion: To hold the Town Assembly meeting on 9th May 2025 at Budworth Hall and to follow the same format as the previous year.

Proposed: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously

39.25 Nominations for Awards to Members of the Community for the Annual Town Assembly Meeting

Councillors discussed the process for the nominations and categories for the awards.

Motion 1: To use Microsoft forms to produce a survey on the town council's website and social media for residents to access and participate. Should residents not vote Councillors will choose the winners. Maximum of 6 nominees with 2 coming from the Councillors and 4 from the residents.

Proposer: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Eydmann **Carried:** Unanimously

40.25 Councillors discussed the proposed Combined Inspection and Testing of all streetlights quotation which was for £2,625 for our 91 streetlights. As the service is specialist the clerk has confirmed that they are the only ones who will be able to undertake the task which was verified by our own electrical contractor that they cannot undertake the work.

Motion 1: To suspend financial regulation 11(h) as three quotations were not sought.

Proposed: Cllr Webb **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell Cllr Walton voted against

Motion 2: To Agree to go with the supplier for the Combined Inspection and Testing of the streetlights can be carried out.

Proposed: Cllr Cole **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously

41.25 CCTV

Councillors discussed the reason to suspend the Financial Regulation 11(h)

Motion 1 to suspend Financial Regulation 11(h)

Proposer: Cllr Cole

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Abstained: Cllr Walton

For: 8

Motion 2 To **AGREE** to place the Council's CCTV with EFDC as per the September minute item 52.24

Proposer: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Barrell

Carried: Unanimously

The clerk informed councillors of the next steps in the process of moving the CCTV to EFDC. It was agreed to have a working party set up to meet to discuss moving the process forward.

Motion: To have a working party meeting to meet and discuss the CCTV and to move forward with EFDC.

Proposer: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Cole

Carried: Unanimously

42.25 RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT DECISIONS MADE AT 19TH SEPTEMBER MEETING 2024

It has been raised by a local resident that the full council meeting held on 19th September 2024 went on for 39 minutes longer than permitted by Standing Orders. Whilst at the meeting it was agreed to extend the meeting by an additional 39 minutes (albeit not recorded in the minutes), this was technically not permitted by the Standing Orders. In order to resolve this matter, Councillors are now asked to:

1. Retrospectively agree all the matters that were agreed at the 19th September 2024, regardless of time.
2. Given the amount of business to be conducted by the Council at the current time, to consider to removal of Standing Order number 3(x) which restricts the time permitted for meetings.

Motion: To retrospectively agree all the matters that were agreed at the 19th September 2024 Full Council Meeting, regardless of time.

Proposed: Cllr Mendoza

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Carried: Unanimously

Motion: Given the amount of business to be conducted by the Council at the current time, to consider to remove Standing Order number 3(x) which restricts the time permitted for meetings.

Proposed: Cllr Mendoza

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Carried: Unanimously

43.25 IT Provision for the Council

Councillors discussed the suspension of the Financial Regulation 11(h) to enable the IT provision to be moved to the new supplier.

Motion 1 to suspend Financial Regulations 11(h)

Proposed: Cllr Mendoza

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Against: Cllr Walton

For: 8

Motion 2 To **Agree** to place the Council's IT with Fusion Technology Sources.

Proposed: Cllr Mendoza

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Against: Cllr Walton

For: 8

44.25 Ongar Bridge Car Park

Councillors **NOTED** the correspondence from V Fund.

45.25 Jubilee Park Pavilion Invoice

Councillors discussed the invoice but agreed that the item be **DEFERRED** for the clerk to investigate our records further.

46.25 Grass Cutting Contract The chairman asked councillors if this item could be moved to the confidential part of the meeting, as this was to discuss a contract. All councillors agreed to this suggestion.

47.25 Renewal of Friend of Essex Heritage

Renewal of the annual subscription this year minimum subscription is £25 or £250 for a life membership.

Motion: to agree to the annual subscription of £25.

Proposed: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Cole

Carried: Unanimously

48.25 Love Lane Road Surface

Love Lane Road surface was discussed by Councillors due to the surface being raised as an issue by a resident. Following the discussion and correspondence from the owners of the properties in Love Lane and that the road is an unadopted road the Councillors **AGREED** that no action would be taken.

49.25 Town Council Meeting Dates 2025-2026

The Councillors **AGREED** the dates of the Town Council Meetings for the year which will be placed on the Council's noticeboards. There will be an August recess again this year.

If any dates clash with the Epping Forest District Council Community Liaison Meeting the meeting will be moved to a different Thursday.

50.25 To Consider entering the Best Kept Playing Fields Competition

Councillor's **NOTED** that the town will be entering the Best Kept Playing Fields Competition.

51.25 Participate in the VE Day celebrations on 8th May 25

It was **AGREED** that on Thursday 8th May 2025 town councils are encouraged to light the Beacons Lamp Lights of Peace at 2130 at the Ongar War Memorial, the raising of a unique VE Day flag at 0900. Residents and dignitaries will be invited to these acts of remembrance.

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr Mendoza

Carried: Unanimously

Chairman to suspend standing order 3(x) to continue the meeting

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Carried: Unanimously

52.25 To REVIEW and ADOPT the new Financial Regulations

The councillors discussed the new financial regulations which NALC has brought into line with the new requirements.

Motion: To adopt the new financial regulations.

Proposed: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Mendoza

Carried: Unanimously

53.25 To Review and ADOPT the new revised Standing Orders

The councillors discussed the updated Standing Orders for the Council

Motion: To ADOPT the new revised Standing Orders

Proposer: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Mendoza

Carried: Unanimously

54.25 To REVIEW and ADOPT the Annual Councils Risk Assessment

The Councillors **reviewed** and **adopted** the Annual Risk Assessment.

Proposer: Cllr Roberts

Seconded: Cllr Cole

Carried: Unanimously

55.25 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

In the event that the agenda contains Exempt (pink) pages, or an item needs to be discussed confidentially, to **CONSIDER** the following motion to be proposed by the Chairman:

“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. However, an item may be placed in the Confidential part of the meeting so long as it is accordance with the Statutory Guidance.

There is currently THREE items to be considered

46.25 Grass Cutting Contract

Councillors discussed the grass cutting contract, three quotations were obtained which were shared by the clerk. To **AGREE** to the new contract for the grass cutting for the summer months and agreed the new supplier.

Motion: To agree to go with the contract with JCM Services for the amount of £9,600. Plus VAT

Proposed: Cllr Roberts

Seconded: Cllr Barrell

Carried: Unanimously

Staffing Committee Meeting – Cllr Eydmann gave an update from the Staffing Meeting held on 13th March 25.

Motion 1: Councillors to agree that with immediate effect the clerk is empowered to share all emails and other forms of communications from councillors that they feel could fall under the classification of bullying, harassment or are of a vexatious nature. And to share that with both the chair of the council and the chair of the staffing committee, so that they can be supported in managing to respond in an appropriate manner.

Proposed: Cllr Walton

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Carried: Unanimously

Motion 2: That all Councillors agree a revision to the terms of reference of the staffing committee as follows, councillors currently under formal investigation as part of the Councils bullying and harassment policy or the code of conduct are prohibited from attending staffing committee

meetings or are members of the staffing committee are temporarily suspended from committee membership until such investigations are concluded.

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

Motion 3: To propose a motion to thanking our clerk for all the hard work that she has undertaken since starting, and especially historical issues but progressing moving matters forward in ways that are both constructive and beneficial to our community.

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

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the Civility and Respect Policy

Proposed: Cllr Webb **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the Complaints Procedure policy

Proposer: Cllr Barrell **Seconded:** Cllr Walton **Carried:** Unanimously

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the Vexatious Complaints policy

Proposer: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously

Love Lane Lease – Councillors **AGREED** the revised Lease for the Love Lane Offices

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann **Seconded:** Cllr Roberts **Carried:** Unanimously

Jubilee Park Pavilion – There was an update from closed meeting with regards to Jubilee Park Pavilion including proposals and next steps. Councillors discussed the outcome of the informal meeting and agreed to set up a working group. The clerk will advise of meeting dates.

Motion: The town clerk is to approach the chair of the OCST to set up a meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Walton **Seconded:** Cllr Mendoza **Abstained:** Cllr Roberts

Motion: The town clerk to set up a date for the working party of Councillors.

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

56.25 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Emergency Plan

Various Leases*

Disability Access – Look at Lease and Contact EFDC*

Strategic Development Plan

Ongar Town Assembly

- **Clerk is aware of these**