

Ongar

Town Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on 4th September 2025 8 P.M. at the Council Offices, Banson's Way, Ongar, CM5 9AS.

MINUTES

137.25 PRESENT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chair: Cllr Gunn

Present: Cllrs Cole, Reay, Eydmann, Feetham, Mendoza, Barrell, Roberts, Vaz, Regan, O'Neill

Also Present: Clerk, District Cllr Keska, Press Officer x1, 6 Members of the Public

To report, approve & record apologies for absence (and the reasons) from members

Apologies Received: Cllr Walton – work commitments & Dist Cllr Dadd

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

Proposed: Cllr Reay

Seconded: Cllr Barrell

Carried: Unanimously

138.25 TO AGREE THE FULL COUNCIL MINUTES OF 17th July 2025

Motion: To AGREE the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on the 17th July 2025 as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr Roberts

Carried: Unanimously

139.25 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

To **RECEIVE** any Declarations of Interest by Members.

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.

Cllrs Cole and Gunn declared a pecuniary interest in agenda items 145.25 & 150.25 as allotment holders and Chair of the allotment association.

140.25 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To **RECEIVE** questions from members of the public for a period determined by the Chairperson of the Meeting. The maximum time allowed for this item is 15 minutes. A member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes. **Please NOTE if the Clerk of the Meeting has not been previously notified of the Question, Council may have to note questions and respond to**

them after the Meeting.

One member of the public spoke for 3 minutes regarding Councillor Conduct.

141.25 TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION REGARDING THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS & EVENT 2025

A presentation was made by the Festival Steering Group to bring the council up to date with the plans for the Christmas Lights switch on will be 30th November commencing at 2pm. The event will be advertised on social media and in the Ongar News.

142.25 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

a. The Councillors **RESOLVED** to pay the £2,000 for the Christmas lights from the festival cost centre.

Proposed: Cllr Reay

Seconded: Cllr Cole

Carried: Unanimously

b. Councillors **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** the Town Council's involvement with both the Christmas Window Competition and the Christmas event by agreeing to have a stall on the 30th November 2025.

Proposed: Cllr

Roberts

Seconded: Cllr Barrell

Carried: Unanimously

143.25 CLERKS REPORT

Councillors were updated by the Clerk of correspondence and information received and actioned.

1. The CCTV upgrade have been completed now for Cerizay. As yet they have not been adopted by EFDC.
2. I have contacted the tree survey company to carry out an up-to-date survey on the trees which were are owned by OTC.
3. We were successful in being given the grant by EFDC for a bench at the Nature Reserve and a table and bench at the Rec playing field. The grant amount is a little below £3000. The Council will need to fund some ground works where necessary to complete the task however, I am anticipating ordering items which can be situated on the grass this must be completed by the end of March 2026.
4. I made contact with London Drainage following the works identified at Love Lane they quoted £3,723. Against the quote from Rentokil which was £12,226.
5. I had a meeting with Graham Raffell from James Hallam our insurers the quote for the year is £16,833.70 with a 2.5% increase if we agree for 3 years. This is an agenda item for Councillors to agree later in this meeting.
6. New telephone system is installed and up and running.
7. The full structural survey has been completed on the streetlight's; we have been advised one streetlight has structural issues and needs to be replaced as soon as possible. I have requested a quotation for this to be carried out. The full report is in the councillor's folder.
8. Our annual play area's inspection has been completed we have a couple of infant chairs which need replacing we are still waiting for the goal post at Shelley this should be with

the supplier week commencing 8th September and the Roundabout will be fitted week commencing 16th September.

9. I have received correspondence this month from several residents. I have placed them in the Councillors folder for your attention; the issues are the graffiti of the Zebra crossings in town, the flags which are now in situ Speeding of traffic at Stondon Road and an email from a resident of 50 years – do we know what this was about?. I have also received an email stating that the traffic going towards the Four Wantz from the high street is too fast and as such I have reported this to SERP's and hopefully they will carry out some speed checks in the area. I have received emails concerning town councillor conduct.
10. I attended a meeting with the chairman and the leader of EFDC earlier this month, the chairman will report the meeting in his update to Council.
11. I have closed the access of the groundsman to the chapel, with the lawn mowers being stored for now at JPP at no charge. I am looking into costs for storage options of a shed at the cemetery or a container. Having been to the chapel I have been informed that the groundsman has items he stores in the chapel from home. I have met with Bakers of Danbury who are specialists in restoration of churches. They will be sending me costs in due course which will enable us to budget for the works. As you know we have an earmarked reserve for the chapel restoration, and it will be interesting to see what the difference is and how much more will be needed. I was informed that there is no need for Harris fencing as the building is not about to fall down. Things we do need to consider are a soak away, to consider the costs of this and the best place to position this is to the side of the chapel. However, this would cause more expense as we need to employ more specialist services to carry out the moving of graves and bones if they are affected. Once I have further information this will be placed as an agenda item.
12. Van signage – having been informed that the signage on the van needs replacing I have been in contact with Signs Express who do our other signs they have a self-adhesive vinyl option which can be fitted for £225 plus VAT which is a permanent option instead of the magnetic signage used currently. The graphic is in the Councillors folder and looks professional.
13. As of yet we have not received our external accounts back from PKF auditors, we have also had no questions raised by them. Looking at last year's response we did not receive it until 19th September. As such the Chair may need to call an extraordinary meeting to sign it off by the deadline date of end of September.
14. I have received a telephone call today from the potential owner of Ongar Bridge they have now exchanged contracts.
15. Earlier this week a meeting to follow up on the possibility of a Town Partnership was held at the town council offices, present was representatives from EFDC, Cllr Dadd, the Chairman of OTC, 2 of the Community Champions Cath and Linda along with Kelly Stone and Martyn Pattie Ongar from Ongar Forum. The meeting progressed well and the issue

of setting up a CIC (community Interest Company) was discussed and it was taken back to be discussed with the Portfolio holder and the Economics Development Team lead. Cllr Dadd had suggested she would speak directly to the Portfolio holder and Fabrizio Ferrari to try to find the stumbling point of the CIC.

16. I have received an updated Staff Handbook from Worknest and will be looking at the changes and what we need to do to protect the staff. There are risk assessments which need to be carried out for sexual harassment and others as changes were made last year.
17. Following works at the nature reserve and consultation with Essex Wildlife Trust we were advised to cut and collect the whole area on a yearly basis the quote for this has come in at £1,764. And will be arranged for later this month.

144.25 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

-Chairmans Report

Meetings with the town clerk

Both the vice chair and I have continued to have weekly line management meetings to monitor progress. I would like to thank the clerk for her continued support to the council in the service both her and her team provide, this is very much appreciated by both the residents and council. The difference that the summer planting, the nature reserve and cemetery maintenance has made has been appreciated by our residents. The clerk has continued to investigate historic decisions and take actions on these including her investigative and exploratory work which is making a real difference to how we operate as a council.

Please can I remind you all that we do not directly engage with the council staff either in person or via email. We only directly work with the Town clerk, and it is her remit to assign tasks as she sees fit.

Meeting with the leader of the District Council

The clerk and I met with Chris Whitbread the Leader of Epping Forest Council as a networking exercise on behalf of the Town Council. Chris was delighted to be attend and has offered to also attend one of our Full Council Meetings at least once a year to discuss progress and updates from the District Council.

Town Partnership Meetings

The Town clerk and I met with representatives from EFDC, along with district councillors, community well-being champions and business owners to discuss the setting up of the partnership.

Ongar News:

Article to be written before the 10th of September deadline.

Article for Ongar News October 2025:

- Remembrance Service – to be discussed on item 147.25
- Town Survey – to be discussed on item 153.25
- Christmas Window Competition and Council involvement - to be discussed on item 142.25 (b)

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

Cllrs reported that ONPCG were inviting Cllr Scott to meet with them.

Cllr Reay reported on ONPCG meeting they were looking to push County Councillor McIvor to spend money on a pedestrian crossing between Ongar Bridge and Hockings Butchers area.

-District and County Councillors

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

Report from Cllr Dadd – read out in the meeting:

- EFDC held an informative briefing meeting for EFDC Cllrs last night. ECC will be submitting several business models by 26 September which will include several models on how many unitary authorities will be formed. The results will not be known for several months.
 - The likelihood is that EFDC will combine with Brentwood, Harlow and probably Chelmsford. The final choices will relate to financial viability and efficiency of services. Essex seem to be in favour of 3 unitary authorities partly because of delivering social services more effectively than would be possible with 4 or 5 authorities. If that is the case, we may be with Maldon, although another 'model' suggests Uttlesford.
 - ECC has set up a website to ensure that residents are kept informed <https://www.essexlgrhub.org/stronger-greater-essex> -however it does not show all the options and costings yet
 - There is also concern about services relating to local communities' needs and how that input will be effected. There could be Neighbourhood Committees—whatever they are!
 - The role of local town and parish councils is as yet unknown especially as some councils in Essex do not have these organisations (**Local Councils Liaison Meeting on 18th September** is likely to be informative)
 - When I hear more or have slides of the presentation that can be available, I will forward them Town Partnerships and Community Hubs
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- Following excellent reports of initiatives that EFDC Economic Development and Communities presented to EFDC scrutiny committees earlier this year, I have been in talks with relevant officers to ensure that Ongar was included in the next trench of communities to benefit!

Town Partnership (this is not the same as the previous town centre partnerships or forums but includes businesses in the wider community, local organisations etc)

- OTC, Ongar Community Champions and other organisations in Ongar have already had several meetings to see if the existing team who very successfully organise Ongar town festival and the Christmas lights could expand their aims and objectives to fulfil this role.
- A community Interest Company had been proposed by Cath Honeywell and Kelly Stone and the business model would support the businesses and local organisations. EFDC had initially said no to this model.
- However I have had meetings with Officers and Portfolio Holder and am hopeful that this will be possible—although details are not yet known.
- As suggested at OTC last meeting, this would be the opportunity to take forward some of ONP Projects and Actions with the expected initial funding.

Community Hub

- Work is also progressing for a community hub for Ongar whereby local residents will be able to meet and access a variety of different services. Once again Cath Honeywell, EFDC and I are in talks to progress this, based on existing community hubs in other parts of EFDC. Once more details are available it is hoped that OTC will also be involved.

Because Town Partnerships and Community Hubs are wider than Planning and Environment-please also provide details of this report to full Council.

Verbal Report from District Councillor Paul Keska

Report by District Councillor Keska was received by Councillors regarding the considerable disturbances in Epping due to the Bell Hotel. He also reported on the reorganisation of the District Council he says there is nothing formal, but it looks like councils could be merging to make a unitary council anything from 1 to 5 councils but maybe 3 for Essex however this is still to be decided.

The Stag application, is going to appeal as it was turned down by District Councillors due to highways concerns. Cllr Keska reported that the only option would be for a qualified Highways engineer to carry out a survey however EFDC would not be willing to pay for the survey to be carried out.

- Details of Consultations

- a) Cllr will advise Members of the numerous Consultations that have been held with Developers on the Planning Development Sites in Ongar – There were no further updates from the vice chair of planning, as these had been discussed in the previous planning meeting before the council meeting.
- b) The clerk will advise of any other consultations that have been received and are not covered separately in this Agenda. – The clerk had no other consultations to report to the council.

145.25 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance reporting

- a. Councillors received a summary of receipts and payments up to the end of July.

b. To review a list of budgetary information on all accounts.

Motion: The Council notes the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of current account as at 31st July 2025 at £7,551.07 agrees with the reconciliation.

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

Motion: The Council noted the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of deposit account as at 31st July 2025 at £618,386.68.

Proposed: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr O'Neill **Carried:** Unanimously

Motion: The Council noted the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of Nationwide account as at 31st July 2025 at £29,288.15

Proposed: Cllr Barrell **Seconded:** Cllr O'Neill **Carried:** Unanimously

Motion: The Council noted the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of allotment account as at 31st July 2025 at £2,409.32

Proposed: Cllr Reay **Seconded:** Cllr Roberts **Carried by 8 votes**

Votes not recorded for Cllr Gunn & Cllr Cole due to a pecuniary interest as allotment holders.

145.25 POLICE REPORT

A police report for the area will be submitted in writing or person.

No Police report was received

146.25 LOVE LANE OFFICE LEASE SIGNAGE

Councillors **RESOLVED** to appoint the Chairman to sign the counter part of Love Lane Office Lease.

Proposer: Cllr Roberts **Seconded:** Cllr Barrell **For:** 9 **Against:** 1

147.25 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Councillors **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** the date and activities for Remembrance Sunday 9th November at 2:30pm at the War Memorial Fyfield Road and to confirm for the clerk to approach the Head at the Ongar Academy to use the school for refreshments after the event.

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

148.25 CEMETERY RAFT

Councillors **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** to instruct the next raft within section 4 of the cemetery. The clerk will approach contractors for the works to be undertaken.

Proposed: Cllr Reay **Seconded:** Cllr O'Neill **Carried:** Unanimously

149.25 INSURANCE RENEWAL

Councillors **DISCUSSED** AND **AGREED** the Council's insurance renewal the insurance quotation is £16,833 per year on a three-year option increasing by 2.5% each year on the three year option.

Proposed: Cllr Reay **Seconded:** Councillor Barrell **Carried:** Unanimously

150.25 ALLOTMENT RENTS REVIEW YEAR ENDING 2026

Due to pecuniary interests being declared by the Chair and Vice Chair, Councillor Reay chaired this item.

Councillors **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** not to raise the allotment rent review for 2026.

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

151.25 NJC PAY AWARD 2025/26

Councillors **NOTED** that the National Joint Council (NJC) have confirmed the pay awards for 2025/26 at 3.2% which took effect from April 2025 and had been backdated in the August salaries for staff.

152.25 APPEALS PANEL COUNCILLORS

Following Councillors discussions it was agreed to **DEFER** this item until November 's meeting.

153.25 RESIDENTS SURVEY

Following extensive discussions on the resident's survey Councillors DEFERRED the item until later in the year understanding that the clerk would not be able to use the information in the budgetary planning for 2026/27. Councillors discussed the proposal of forming a working party to look at the survey, there was no agreement on when this should commence.

Proposed: Cllr Reay **Seconded:** Cllr O'Neill **Carried:** Unanimously

154.25 BUDGET PLANNING

Councillors **NOTED** that any items to be considered for the 2026/2027 budget should be brought to the attention of the Clerk's before the next meeting.

155.25 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 zero items to be considered
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156.25 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Emergency Plan

Various Leases*

Disability Access – Look at Lease and Contact EFDC*

Strategic Development Plan*

Speed Activation Device

Meeting ends 21:57

- **Clerk is aware of these**