



**Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on 19 February 2026 at 8:03, at the Council Offices,
Banson's Way, Ongar CM5 9AS.**

MINUTES

- 15.26 Present and apologies for absence**
Present: - Chair Cllr Gunn
Cllrs: Eydmann, Reay, Feetham, Mendoza, Barrell, Hollingum, Parr, Regan, Vaz, O'Neill
Apologies: Cllrs Cole, Roberts, Walton
Also Apologies: District Councillors Dadd & Keska
To report, approve & record apologies for absence (and the reasons) from members
Motion: The council to record and accept apologies for absence.
Proposer: Cllr Eydmann **Seconded:** Cllr O'Neill **Carried:** Unanimously
- 16.26 Vacancy for Councillor Co-option**
The chair introduced a resident who were interested in being co-opted to the council. Alison Wingfield had expressed an interest in becoming a councillor. Alison introduced herself to the council and explained why she wished to become a councillor. Alison was asked to leave the chamber whilst councillors discussed the matter in depth.

Councillors then discussed the applicant, Alison Wingfield. A vote was taken to Co-opt Alison Wingfield to the Council for Shelley Ward and a motion passed to invite her to take her place at the council table.
Alison Wingfield was invited back into the council chamber, asked if she still wished to join the council as Shelley ward councillor, then invited to join the council and sign her Declaration of Office.
- 17.26 To agree the Full Council Minutes of 15th of January 2026**
Motion: to Agree the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 15th January 2026.
Proposer: Cllr Reay **Seconded:** Cllr Eydmann **Carried:** Unanimously
- 18.26 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**
To RECEIVE any Declarations of Interest by Members.
Members of the Council are subject to paragraphs 6 (DPs), 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 declarations of interests and participation in the meeting insofar as any item of business involves such an interest.
Cllr Gunn declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 22.26 Motion 4 as an allotment holder.
- 19.26 Questions from Members of the public and public participation**
To RECEIVE questions from members of the public for a period determined by the Chair 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.
None present

Clerks Report

1. Budworth Hall has been booked for 17th April to hold the Annual Town Assembly, the invitation list has been reviewed, and invitations will be going out in due course. As part of the evening, we have asked if some parties would like to give a brief speech for example local groups along with the Epping Forest Museum. The evening will include the presentation of the award for Citizen of the Year. Followed by Cheese and Wine.
2. I have received correspondence from a resident regarding the litter in Ongar bridge car park and have contacted the owner of the car park. Having visited the car park this week there is considerable rubbish including building rubble, empty beer cans etc and it does look awful.
3. I have been contacted by the representative from V Fund the company who has the option to purchase Ongar Bridge Car Park area, the email is in the councillors file for your perusal. It basically is saying that they have taken legal advice and are threatening to take the Council to an Upper Tribunal to remove the covenant. I will place this on March's agenda so that it can be discussed.
4. The volunteer from Essex Wildlife Trust who helps at the nature reserve has planted some indigenous plants to the area this week. The council purchased the plants to enhance the area. I have also been in talks with new engagement coordinator, and she is trying to bring people who are isolated at home into the community and may be willing to do a little litter picking or even have a community allotment this is being further discussed, and she also will be invited to the town assembly.
5. I have received notification that we are due a health and safety visit from Worknest to audit our procedures, they sent me the last inspection carried out in 2023 of which there are 22 pages of actions points which have not been actioned. I had already arranged a legionella risk assessment for the building. First aid training has been booked for the outside supervisor and myself, with other staff members to follow. There is a lot of consideration to be made to lone working as previously highlighted in the inspection and consideration of how we keep the outside team safe whilst they work alone, whether we use dead man alarms or another form of alarm, 1. to know where they are, 2. to be notified if something occurs where we would need to send emergency services to.
6. The work in the rec field has been completed removing a lot of the overgrown hedgerow, followed by a litter pick by Karen Bush and others. The area looks so much better and pictures can be made available should you wish to view them or visit the area.
7. Greensted Play Area has had some damaged see-saw stoppers fitted last week and some new flooring underneath it replaced.
8. Cllr Regan reported to me that his signature was on his Declaration of Interest on the website. I carried out an investigation, and confirmed that it was, it was removed immediately, it was entered on to our internal breach document and reported to the Information Commissioner Office. In speaking with the ICO office I was informed that there was no further action to be taken. An apology was sent to Cllr Regan and the staff member involved was reminded verbally of the importance of protecting the personal data of people.
9. The insurance claim following the person falling over in Moreton Road, the defence has been submitted and I am waiting to hear anything further.
10. I have received from Councillor Keska a quote for the clock at Budworth Hall to be repaired the sum is £3,218.40. We pay each year for the annual service but have no money in the cost centre for the repair work. Cllr Keska stated that the town council agreed to pay for the maintenance of the clock some years ago. This matter will be placed on the next full council meeting for discussion.
11. I have had contact from the Monitoring Officer at EFDC and she has responded to the residents who had complained last year. There was a standards meeting last week and a new process has been put in place for making complaints about councillor's whether town or district.

12. I have attended NALC training after the precept which basically is about obtaining grants for items identified, one example was a building refurbishment.

13. I took the planning clerk for a drive around Ongar to show her some of the areas which are discussed on a regular basis so that she will understand where it is being discussed and by seeing them, she can understand the issues being raised.

A reminder to councillors about only using gov.uk email addresses for all council correspondence only.

21.26

Reports & Members Reports
-Chairmans Report
Meetings with the Clerk

I have continued to have weekly meetings with the town clerk to look at progress on motions made in council and other developments on behalf of the town council.

28th January 2026 Budworth Hall
Stakeholders Meeting with Boor Homes

Cllrs Mendoza, Raey and I attended the stakeholders meeting on 28th January with Boor Homes, also in attendance were district Cllrs Balcomb and Keska. It was an opportunity to look at the site, spend some time discussing the current layout and potential benefits to the community, in terms of community assets, for example play areas, nature reserve and allotments. I made it very clear as Chairman that official remarks on the draft plans when they are ready and come to council will be the appropriate time to make comments. I suggested that the community incentives, for example the possibility of outdoor spaces for play would be better addressed by the local schools and that a separate meeting would be beneficial. In addition to this I also sign posted the developers to EFDC Well-being champions and particularly one of our representatives Cath Honeywell. On behalf of the Town Council I would like to thank Boor homes for their kind invitation and an opportunity to explore the possible direction of these plans.

External Meetings attended either in person or viewed online:

EALC Executive Meeting – 22nd January 2026

Epping Forest District Association of Local Councils meeting 18th February 2026 – Cllr Feetham to feedback.

Watched the EFDC Place Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 27th January 2026 7.00 pm – TFL

EFDC Standards Committee - Tuesday 10th February 2026 7.00 pm – Monitoring Officer and new procedures.

I would encourage councillors to either try and attend when applicable or perhaps watch the webcast for both the district and county council meetings.

Councillors attend The Ongar Academy Production for 2026 'Annie'

Councillors Eydmann and myself attended this year's Ongar Academy performance of 'Annie' on Friday 30th January 2026. It was an absolute pleasure to watch the production and on behalf of the Town Council we would like to congratulate the students and staff that made it a great success!

Wednesday 11th February 2026

On behalf of the Town Council, I had a Meeting with the Town Clerk and Assistant to touch base on the 'Annual Town Assembly' arrangements:

1. The MS Forms survey has now gone live for nominees.
2. Successful nominees will be contacted shortly after the survey has finished. We will know the names of the top 4 awards it will then be down to council to decide the 2 in the next full council meeting, which falls on the night before the assembly.
3. Invites have gone out to groups for stands and speakers.
4. The report will be written up in the usual format and circulate to councillors with a short deadline.

Articles for Ongar News submitted for the March edition include the following:

Ongar News March 2026

**Ongar Town Council Citizen of the year award 2026 nominations now live!
Residents Survey open now until Wednesday the 26th of March, all nominations must be made by 12.00pm on that day.**

Ongar Residents are asked to nominate 4 people in the community who have made a difference during the year. The council intends to have 6 people in total but would like the Ongar Community to nominate 4. This can be for any activity that you think that they have made an impact on. Please type in the name of the person you are nominating (you can complete multiple entries if you would like to nominate more than one person up to 4 in total). The council will then decide the final recipients who will be presented with the award at the Annual Town Assembly on the Friday 17th April 2026 starting at 7.00pm in Budworth Hall . To access the survey go to the Ongar Town Council website www.ongartowncouncil.gov.uk and click on the link 'Nominations for CIVIC awards'. Those residents that are unable to nominate online can on request ask for a paper version from the Ongar Town Council clerk (please see contact details and opening times at the bottom of this article).

Ongar Town Council would like to thank you for your completion of this survey.

Ongar Town Assembly Friday 17th April 2026 in Budworth Hall starting at 7.00pm

We are pleased to announce that all residents, groups, societies, and organisations are invited to this year's Town Assembly, All Parish and Town Councils throughout England are required by law to hold an Annual Parish Assembly between the dates of 1st March and 1st June (inclusive). This is not a Council meeting but a meeting of registered electors.

During the evening, there will be the following taking place:

- Annual Town Report – Read by the chair of the council
- Stalls from clubs, societies and organisations that support the Ongar residents for registered electors to visit.
- Speeches from community partners and officials.
- Time for Q&A from registered electors.
- A Q&A box for registered electors.
- Civic awards nominated by both residents and the town council.
- Refreshments including wine and soft drinks.

-Town Councillor's reports and for those that attend on committees on behalf of the town council.

ONPCG Cllr Reay – Meeting to plan to object to R1 and the two Fyfield Business Park plans.

Twinning Association Cllr Eydman – Fundraiser for the Twinning Association - Bingo on 28th March at the Council Offices 28th March £12 per person, drinks and nibbles bring your own. Resources to cover next year's visit to Ongar.

Epping Forest District Associations of Local Councils (EFDALC) held on Wednesday 18th February 2026 on Zoom.

Cllr Feetham gave some updates from the meeting, the main points covered were as follows:

- Proposed local government re- organization and devolution of councils.
- Mayoral elections and associated costs
- Highways Panels – some communication infers that the panel is no longer taking request as the current ones need to be completed before devolution takes place, conflicting experiences of councils asking for work to be carried out, with some councils funding this themselves.
- S106 money from developments – some members were unsure as to the process for applying, how the funding gets allocated and distributed and concerns on whether they would receive the money or not.

Cllr Gunn (Chair) who also attended the meeting as the other representative from Ongar Town council mentioned that he had been contacted by another member of another council in the Epping Forest District to raise a question at the EALC Executive in his role as representative for EFDALC. The question was with regards to whether town and parish councilors should have a retirement age rather like the current upper limit for Justice of the peace.

-Details of Consultations

- a) Cllr Raey (Vice Chairman) for Planning reported that there had been no other consultations received.
- b) The Town clerk reported that there had been a consultation received which was on the Councillors Folder for their attention.

22.26

Financial Reports

Finance reporting

- a. To receive a summary of receipts and payments up to the end of January 2026.
- 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 January 2026 at £23,087.70 agrees with the reconciliation.

Proposer: Cllr Mendoza

Seconded: Cllr Reay

Carried: Unanimously

Motion: The Council notes the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of deposit account as at 31st January 2026 at £581,941.05.

Proposer: Cllr Barrell

Seconded: Cllr Mendoza

Carried: Unanimously

Motion: The Council notes the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of Nationwide account as at 31st January 2026 at £29,638.73

Proposer: Cllr Parr

Seconded: Cllr O'Neill

Carried: Unanimously

Motion: The Council notes the budgetary information and confirms that the account balance of allotment account as at 31st January 2026 at £2,486.62

Proposer: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr Mendoza

1 Abstention

To NOTE the CCLA balance is £50,118.16

23.26

Police Report

As no police report was forthcoming the clerk had obtained data from Essex Police website with figures for December 2025 there were 38 crimes reported in Ongar for the month.

24.26

Assertion 10

Members were informed that currently the town council does not meet the current standards which would allow the council to confirm they were compliant with the new AGAR 2025/26. The areas of assertion 10 are as follows:

1. Domain based email
2. GDPR compliance i.e. data retention policy
3. IT policy
4. Accessible Website

The website is not currently accessible compliant and as such we will not be able to meet the new standards. The clerk to ensure compliance has met with a complaint website provider and proposes that to ensure compliance we move from Vision ICT to Aubergine which will ensure the website meets the new compliance. The website will be easier to navigate, look better and be user friendly. The company provides websites to town and parish councils as one of the owners is a town councillor and clerk who had listened to feedback to ensure the website is what local councils need to be compliant. The new website can go ahead as this falls within the clerks delegated budget.

Motion: The council **RESOLVES** to move to a complaint provider 'Aubergine', to meet Assertion 10 requirements.

Proposer: Cllr Reay

Seconded: Cllr O'Neill

Carried: Unanimously

25.26

Memorial Bench Request

The clerk had been approached by Ongar Sports and Social Trust for a memorial bench to be placed in memory of Terry Thurley who passed away in November 2025. Terry had been associated with the Ongar Sports Club for almost 70 years, having first played football at Love Lane in 1956, aged 14. Having founded Ongar United F.C. in 1966, he was their secretary for 57 years. Terry was continuously employed at the Club until last summer when his health deteriorated.

Motion: Ongar Town Council supports the decision to place a memorial bench by the Ongar Sports Trust in memory of Terry Thurley.

Proposed: Cllr Reay

Seconded: Cllr Hollingum

Carried: Unanimously

26.26

CCTV Update

Councillor Reay asked council if there was an appetite to re-establish the working party for the CCTV., this was following the recent upgrades to the CCTV equipment. The chairman reminded council that it had been previously resolved that the contract and operational issues were being dealt with by the Town clerk and that any additional cameras should have been put forward for consideration in the November meeting as a request for budget planning, along with a rationale as to why.

Members raised issues with local crimes to see if they had happened within the vicinity of the councils' cameras, the clerk reminded councillors that according to the data there had been 38 incidents in December 2025.

As an action the clerk agreed to contact PC Warren Shepard to confirm where the crimes had been committed to see if they had taken place near the council CCTV and to see if so if this had been a deterrent.

Council agreed that there was no need for a working party.

27.26 Councillor Meeting Attendance Policy

Members had the opportunity to review the Councillor's Meeting Attendance Policy on the councillors ONEDRIVE, to formalize the process. The policy gives clear guidelines for absence from meetings and how to report the absence along with long leave procedures.

The Clerk reminded council of the following statutory responsibilities:

The Local Government Act 1972 Section 85 states that a councillor automatically ceases to be a member if they don't attend any meeting of the authority (or its committees/sub-committees) for a continuous period of six months from their last attendance.

- Pre-Approval is Key:

The local authority must approve the absence before the six-month period ends for the member to remain in office.

- Exceptions & Dispensations:
- Attendance at committees, sub-committees, or joint bodies counts as meeting attendance.
- Authorities can grant dispensations for absence, often for health reasons or other significant circumstances, preventing disqualification.
- Military service during emergencies/war can also be a valid exception.
- Purpose: It ensures active participation and accountability of elected local government members.

Members were asked to adopt the policy.

Motion: To adopt the Councillor Meeting Attendance Policy.

Proposer: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr O'Neill

Carried: Unanimously

28.26 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 in accordance with the Statutory Guidance.

There are currently four items to be considered.

29.26 Staffing Committee Update

Cllr Eydmann as chair of the staffing committee gave an update on the meeting held on the 27th January 2026.

After receiving a report from the clerk in the staffing committee meeting in the closed items section of the meeting, the following actions have been agreed:

1. The Clerk will submit any emails that she may consider as vexatious, aggressive or rude to the staffing committee. The Clerk will be supported in a collective response by the committee.
2. The clerk will share any emails which infer operational matters with the council chairman as he acts as a representative for the council in his weekly meetings with the clerk.
3. In the chairman's weekly meetings, he supports the clerk with operational matters that are as a result from motions passed in the full town council meetings, therefore any correspondence not including requests for agenda items or motions for future meetings should be sent to the chair to be discussed at their weekly meetings.
4. Questions were raised about the previous long standing locum clerk pay, and the committee asked the clerk to seek advice which she has done from EALC, the clerk is now acting on this with the relevant bodies.
5. For staff security the clerk has asked for some enhancements to the door intercom system, and improvement of exterior lighting, which were agreed by the committee.
6. The clerk is looking into well-being initiatives for the Town Council Staff.

30.26 Jubilee Park Pavilion EICR

The clerk gave an update on the new EICR and advised that quotes had been requested but some had not been received yet as such the item was DEFFERED.

31.26 Jubilee Park Fencing Quote

The clerk had put the quotes for the fencing at JPP in the folder for members to view and discuss. The councillor's discussed the quotes for a like for like fence with 10 year product guarantee & agreed to go with the quote from Elite Landscapes. To the value of £16,595 plus VAT it will be taken from reserves.

Motion: To agree to the fence at JPP being replaced at £16,595 plus VAT awarding the contract to 'Elite Landscapes'.

Proposer: Cllr Reay

Seconded: Cllr Hollingum

Carried: Unanimously

32.26 Jubilee Park Lease

Cllr Reay raised the question of the current situation with chairman of the Ongar Community Sports Trust not communicating with the Town Council. Cllrs were reminded that the official point of contact was the chair of the trust and they have a responsibility to engage, with the Town Council as their landlord. The clerk also pointed out to Cllrs that she had sent several emails to the chairman of the trust without any response.

Following discussions, it was agreed that the trust is not currently fulfilling their responsibility with regards to engaging with the Town Council.

Motion: To support the clerk to communicate with the trust with a solicitor's letter, with in the letter the clerk could give the option for the trust to formally nominate a spokesman if they wish.

Proposer: Cllr Eydmann

Seconded: Cllr O'Neill

Abstention: 1

33.26

Items for Future Meetings

Various Leases*

Disability Access

Strategic Development Plan*

- **Clerk is aware of these.**