



ORLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Orleton Parish Council held on Thursday 21st September 2023 at 7:30pm at the Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors: C. Mitchell (in the Chair), B. Rogers, V. Bishop, R. Gittings, D. Lane.

IN ATTENDANCE: Olena Barrett (Clerk), Cllr Dan Hurcomb (Bircher Ward; from item 7.8), 4 members of the public

MINUTES

1. To receive apologies of absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Powell (holidays) and Cllr Simmons (possible Covid, precautionary distancing).

2. To consider any declarations of interest and written requests for dispensation on agenda items.

NONE

3. To approve Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 17th August 2023.

Two amendments were proposed by Cllr Lane:

M.R. 6.1 – to remove the word “woefully”;

After Item 9 – to remove words referring to a member of the public joining the meeting.

With the above **amendments AGREED**, the Minutes were **APPROVED** as true and accurate record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

4. To receive an update from HC Bircher Ward Member, Councillor D. Hurcomb (limited to 5 minutes)

The item was deferred until the end of the Agenda and the update was received following item 19.

Update was received, copy appended to the Minutes. – APPENDIX 1

5. Open session (limited to 10 minutes)

To receive views of local residents on items set out in the agenda and other parish matters proposed for inclusion in future agendas.

A member of the public raised an issue of a derelict house and overgrown garden adjacent to her property. The Chairman advised that this is not an issue within Parish Council powers and it should be raised with Herefordshire Council through the Ward Member, Cllr D. Hurcomb.

6. Clerk's report

To receive Clerk's update on current matters and agree next steps where appropriate.

Following matters were reported to the Council by the Clerk:

- 6.1** A change in the PC banking provider's online banking system was drawn to the Members attention. Signatories were advised to familiarise themselves with the new system before the switch happens at the end of September. Clerk to send out detailed information.
- 6.2** Lengthsman grant was approved by Herefordshire Council and the Annual Maintenance Schedule, as approved by the PC in August, was accepted as part of the contract. The PC will be able to retrospectively claim expenses for approved jobs until the end of current financial year.
- 6.3** Invoices for the share of SIDs maintenance have been issued to the two co-owning parishes, with payments expected imminently.
- 6.4** Remembrance Day arrangements discussed with Rev. James Forrester. Following matters need the PC attention:
 - Contact with a resident who plays the Last Post – contact details will be provided by one of the Cllrs, Clerk to contact the resident.
 - What uniformed organisations will take part – member of the public confirmed that Scouts and Cubs will take part.
- 6.5** Broken stile coming out of the Rec onto the fields was reported by a member of the public. This was referred to the Parish Footpath Officer and will be repaired in the next couple of days.

7. Finance.

7.1 To note the bank balance – 31st August 2023

Bank balance was **NOTED** - £23,732.33

7.2 Conclusion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31st March 2023 – External Audit

7.2.1 *To note the Conclusion of limited assurance review for the year ended 31st March 2023.*

The Council **NOTED** the Conclusion of limited assurance review for the year ended 31st March 2023.

7.2.2 *To consider and note the External Auditor's Report and Opinion 2022/23, as below, and decide actions necessary to fulfil the Auditor's recommendations.*

"On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertions in Section 1, Boxes 1,3,4,5 and 6, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified. This is consistent with the internal auditor's responses to Internal Control Objectives A,B,C,D,G,L,M and N."

The PC **CONSIDERED** the Report and Opinion of the External Auditor, as above. The RFO confirmed that the Council has made arrangements for proper administration of its financial affairs and that it is on schedule to implement Internal Auditor's recommendations as planned. The current regime of approvals, reporting and budget monitoring and internal audit will continue, concluding the necessary actions. No further recommendations were made by the External Auditor.

7.2.3 To consider and approve the 'Notice of Conclusion of Audit. Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023' as prepared by the RFO.

7.2.3.1 To consider and decide the appropriate period of time for the 'Notice' to remain published. The 'Notice' must be published before September the 30th and remain published for a period specified by this Authority.

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Rogers and unanimously **APPROVED** to publish the 'Notice' for a period of 14 days, starting on Monday, 25th September. The 'Notice' will be published on the PC noticeboard and website.

7.2.3.2 To consider and approve an appropriate, reasonable payment for purchase by any person of copies of the AGAR on application to the RFO.

It was proposed by Cllr Rogers, seconded by Cllr Gittings and unanimously **AGREED** to **APPROVE** charge of £6, with no increase of the charge as in previous financial year.

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Bishop and unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the 'Notice of Conclusion of Audit. AGAR for the year ended 31st March 2023'.

7.2.3.3 To confirm that the required AGAR documents will be published and remain available for public inspection on the Authority's website for the period of minimum 5 years from the date of publication. To confirm that past financial records are available for public inspection on the Authority's website for full 5 past years.

The RFO confirmed that arrangements have been made for the publication of all required documents on the PC website and that past financial years records are available on said website as required.

7.3 To note the receipt of precept 2023/24 payment

To note the receipt of second part of precept 2023/24 payment (due 19th September 2023) - £15,633.00

NOTED

7.4 To consider and adopt Orleton Parish Council Reserves Policy.

The PC considered the draft Reserves Policy. Following questions were raised and discussed:

- The possibility of holding Earmarked Reserves with a provider other than the PC current bank. It was explained that an arrangement to hold Reserves with the current provider offers benefits of immediacy and security of access; the possible better interest rate offered by other providers does not outweigh the benefits and with the amounts involved would constitute a very modest gain, quite likely further reduced by banking charges.
- Unspent funds held in Earmarked Reserves will roll over to the next financial years and may require replenishment, where appropriate.

Following amendment was proposed by Cllr Lane:

Reserves Policy S. 4.2.8 – to amend wording as follows:

"Hardware Fund – To be build up at a rate of £200 a year to allow for acquisition, repair and replacement of PC's hardware equipment, in particular power tools and equipment to be used by the footpath and land drainage volunteers."

This was seconded by Cllr Gittings and, with the amended wording, it was unanimously **AGREED** to **ADOPT** the Reserves Policy.

7.5 To consider and approve purchase of Remembrance Sunday poppy wreath.

It was proposed by Cllr Gittings, seconded by Cllr Bishop and unanimously **APPROVED** to purchase poppy wreath type F from the Royal British Legion shop.

7.6 To consider and approve setting up Direct Debit with HMRC for the purpose of regular PAYE payments.

7.6.1 *To authorise the Clerk to set up Direct Debit arrangements to HMRC for monthly PAYE payments.*

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Lane and unanimously **APPROVED** to authorise the Clerk to set up Direct Debit for monthly PAYE payments to HMRC.

7.6.2 *To approve next due PAYE payment - £361.23 (includes adjustments from 01.04.23)*

Following question from Cllr Lane it was explained that hourly change, as approved on July 20th, triggered PAYE liability from 1st April 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Mitchell and the payment was unanimously **APPROVED**.

7.7 To review bank signatories' authorities and level of access and confirm if it is still adequate for the Authority's needs and compliance with best practice.

Following a review of the PC bank signatories authorities and access it was **AGREED** that the current arrangements are adequate for the PC needs.

It was reported that one of the signatories does not have an online banking access and it was **AGREED** to authorise the Clerk to make suitable arrangements.

7.8 To consider and approve the following (but not limited to) outstanding invoices for payment:

The following invoices were **APPROVED** for payment by BACS:

- 7.8.1 SWARCO (SID maintenance contract until 2026) - £2,032.20
- 7.8.2 Hudson Stonework Ltd (War Memorial refurbishment) - £3,342.00
- 7.8.3 PKF Littlejohn LLP (External Audit fee) - £252.00
- 7.8.4 Lengthsman August 2023 - £584.40
- 7.8.5 Leo Pest Control, September 2023 - £85.20
- 7.8.6 Parish Footpaths Officer (PROW safety steps, materials) - £38.43
- 7.8.7 Travel & admin expenses - £40.32 + £38.69
- 7.8.8 PC Telephone - £10.00

7.9 To note the following payments:

Following payments were **NOTED**:

- 7.9.1 ICO Data Protection fee (DD) - £35
- 7.9.2 MMSS engraved bench (WTOF grant) - £987.99
- 7.9.3 PCC (Annual Parish Meeting refreshments reimbursement) - £4.19
- 7.9.4 Clerk's salary for August, incl. adjustments.

8. Grants:

8.1 To consider and adopt Orleton Parish Council Grants and Donations Policy.

To consider and adopt reviewed Grants & Donations Policy, approve Grants Application form and End of Project Report form.

The draft Grants Policy was considered by the Council.

Cllr Rogers stated that, whilst he supports the Policy in principle, he proposes an amendment as follows:

To amend the upper limit of grants for one applicant per financial year to £1000
This was seconded by Cllr Gittings and put to vote by the Chairman. Two Members voted in favour.

Following that, the originally proposed £500 limit for grants was put to vote. Two Members voted in favour.
The Chairman used his casting vote to support this motion. The Chairman did not use his original vote.

It was therefore **APPROVED** to **ADOPT** the Grants Policy without amendments. The Grant Application Form and End of Project Form were **APPROVED** as part of the Policy and the OPC Grants Scheme.

8.2 To consider and agree categories of grants funding to be sought from external grant awarding bodies.

To identify areas and categories where external grants funding might be sought to support OPC projects.

The following areas were identified as desired for seeking external grant funding:

- a. Traffic management / speed control schemes (village entry gates, SIDs replacement, school zebra crossing, etc.);
- b. Footpaths / PROW (stiles, signage, maps, leaflets, environmental projects, etc.);
- c. Street furniture (noticeboards, benches, waste bins, etc.);
- d. Equipment / tools (equipping working groups and parties, etc.);
- e. Flood resilience (improvements, repairs, investments, resilience schemes, etc.);
- f. Digital improvements (website, IT equipment).

9. Working Groups:

To consider and resolve to establish the following Working Groups, approve appropriate Terms of Reference and agree any further steps as may be deemed necessary.

9.1 Land Drainage Working Group

9.1.1 To approve LDWG Terms of Reference.

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Bishop and unanimously **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the Land Drainage Working Group Terms of Reference.

9.1.2 To appoint two PC Members to the LDWG and designate the Group Lead.

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Bishop and unanimously **AGREED** to delegate Councillors Powell and Lane as PC members of the LDWG and **APPOINT** Cllr Lane as the Group Lead.

9.2 Adopt a Footpath Working Group

9.2.1 To Approve AFWG Terms of Reference.

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Rogers and unanimously **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the Adopt a Footpath Working Group Terms of Reference.

9.2.2 To appoint two PC Members to the AFWG and designate the Group Lead.

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Rogers and unanimously **AGREED** to delegate Councillors Gittings and Lane as PC members of the AFWG. The Parish Footpath Officer, Mr Martin Bradford, was **APPOINTED** as the AFWG Lead.

9.3 To approve purchase of a First Aid kits for the use by the Working Groups during their activities.

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Gittings and unanimously **APPROVED** to purchase two First Aid kits for the use of LDWG and AFWG. The kits are to be kept by the respective Group Leads and made available, as required for use during Groups activities.

9.4 To consider and approve the provision of First Aid training to Members appointed to the Working Groups and WGs Volunteers, in accordance to approved Terms of Reference.

Two quotes (both £500) from training providers were considered with two options within each – an in-house group training for up to 12 people, or on-site individual training for delegates. Group training delivered locally was considered a more efficient and effective option, with Anubis chosen as the preferred provider.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr Rogers, seconded by Cllr Mitchell and unanimously **APPROVED** to provide First Aid training for members of the two Working Groups. Clerk to organise.

10. Neighbourhood Development Plan review

To consider initiation of the first review of the Orleton and Richards Castle Neighbourhood Plan approved in April 2017 and agree next steps.

Items 10 – 10.3 were deferred until later in the Agenda and were considered following item 15.

10.1 To consider the current Neighbourhood Area designation and agree next steps

To review the Neighbourhood Area designation as per the current NDP, consider its relevance and extent and agree next steps.

The current Neighbourhood Area, as designated for the NDP made in April 2017 and including Orleton and Richards Castle (Herefordshire) Parishes was considered by the PC. In appreciation of the widely shared opinion of Orleton residents the PC considered that the current area designation no longer reflects the best interest and needs of the Parish.

It was, therefore, proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Mitchell and unanimously **RESOLVED** to apply to Herefordshire Council for a new Neighbourhood Area designation to include Orleton Parish alone. It was **AGREED** to write to the Richards Castle Parish Council to advise it of this resolution.

10.2 To consider and resolve to establish an NDP Review Working Group, appoint members and set its Terms of Reference.

To establish Working Group to undertake the initial stages of the Review of the NDP and map out the process.

It was proposed by Cllr Bishop, seconded by Cllr Rogers and unanimously **RESOLVED** to establish NDP Review Working Group, **APPROVE** the proposed Terms of Reference and **APPOINT** Councillors: Bishop, Rogers, Gittings and Mitchell as members of the Group.

First meeting and venue to be agreed by the members accordingly.

10.3 To authorise the Clerk to approach planning consultants recommended by HALC to seek quotes and initial guidance for the process.

It was proposed by Cllr Rogers, seconded by Cllr Bishop and unanimously **APPROVED** to authorise the Clerk to approach planning consultants and seek quotes and advice.

11. Lengthsman

To consider and approve schedule of works for November.

Following works were **APPROVED** for November:

- Scraping off drain tops throughout the Parish;
- Kerb scraping throughout the village itself, to include hire of tractor/loader bucket and skip for disposal of arisings. (to be carried out before and as close to the Remembrance Day as possible)

- Strim and tidy around the War Memorial (to be carried out before and as close to Remembrance Day as possible).

12. Street furniture

To approve locations for the installation of benches within the parish.

- 12.1** To approve moving of green bench currently in the Hallets Well / St. George's Crescent area to Tunnel Lane (to replace bench written-off due to bad state of repair).

APPROVED

- 12.2** To approve installation of newly acquired bench (WTOF grant) in the Hallets Well / St. George's area.

APPROVED

- 12.3** To authorise the Clerk to commission the Lengthsman to carry out necessary works, as above, including removal of the bench in Tunnel Lane (as approved on 20/07, M.R. 14.2).

APPROVED

13. Planning

- 13.1** To consider the following planning applications for determination by Herefordshire Council:

232616 - 17 Mortimer Drive, Orleton, Ludlow, Herefordshire SY8 4JW - Proposed works to T1 - Hawthorn - 30% crown reduction. T2 - Hazel - remove to allow works on T4. T3 - Holly - remove to allow works on T4. T4 - Oak - to pollard. T5 - Hazel - as per T2. T6 - Hawthorn - to fell. T6 is dead and is very close to the boundary and neighbouring property. T7 and T8 - both Silver Birch - to pollard/40% crown reduction. T9 - Damson - thin and reduce to accommodate work on T4 and to reduce overhang of conservatory. T10 - Greengage - prune and thin (approx. 30%) to reduce overhang of neighbouring property.

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr Mitchell and unanimously **RESOLVED** to submit following comment to the above works to trees application:

With regards to the Oak tree – T4, the Parish Council is concerned that no percentage of the crown pollarding is specified in the application. Having regard to the Royal Horticultural Society's guidance oak trees should be pollarded by no more than 15%, more drastic reductions posing a significant risk to mature trees. Furthermore and in line with RHS advice, to prevent Oak Wilt no work should be undertaken before November 2024 and the works should be completed before April 2025. This particular tree is a distinctive specimen, which can be seen from many aspects of the locality.

The Council would also like the Planning Authority to ensure that these conditions have been followed and requests that a tree inspection be scheduled to ensure that works have been carried out as specified.

- 13.2** To note the planned Kings Road bridge (Comberton) repair works and planned road closure. Delayed works now scheduled to commence on Monday, 2nd October.

NOTED

14. Consultations:

- 14.1** To consider the Electric Vehicles consultation and agree response (suggested EV charge points).

- 14.2** LEVI infrastructure grant – to consider grant invitation letter and agree next steps.

The Council considered both consultations and, in light of the fact that the Village Hall is not the PC property, it was **RESOLVED** to pass the consultation on to the Village Hall Committee for consideration. Details were passed to Cllr Gittings in his capacity as Village Hall Trustee.

15. To receive updates and agree next steps, where appropriate:

- 15.1** Village Hall Committee meeting – to receive an update from Cllr Gittings.

Cllr Gittings updated the meeting as follows:

- Current account balance: £13,434.67 after fuel bill settled.
A question was raised by Cllr Rogers enquiring about the balance of VH Deposits Account. The exact balance of this account was not known at the time.
- Oil tank needs replacing due to split, not leaking. New tank will need to be positioned differently to comply with legal requirements. Some difficulties in finding a suitable contractor. Ongoing matter.
- With new community spaces becoming available in the village (St. George's, The Boot, Rec's Pavilion) the VH may be losing some bookings, although this has not yet manifested itself and revenue from VH hire remains strong.
- Full programme of events for winter 2023 available; the VH Cttee looking for more ideas.
- Coffee Morning group looking for tombola donations.

15.2 Flood Group – to receive an update from Cllr Lane.

Cllr Lane updated the Committee as follows:

- LDWG carried out another session of regular maintenance of Brimfield Brook on Sat, 2nd September – alongside Bonfire Field.
Thanks were extended to all LD Volunteers for their hard and vital work in improving and maintaining the village's land drainage and decreasing flood risk.
- Upcoming maintenance sessions to complete pre-winter clearance are planned on Sat, 23rd September at Bonfire Field and Sat, 30th September at the lower end of the Brook at the back of Millbrook Close.
- The Brook will be monitored by the LDVs throughout the Autumn season for leaf fall and other blockages and attended as needed.
- The equipment provided by the PC was gratefully received and proved indispensable.

It was noted by other PC Members that, since the initial clearance of the Brook and subsequent LDWG's maintenance regime, the water level meter remained at low levels with reduction in flooding risk apparent.

15.3 Footpaths/PROW – to receive and update from Cllr Lane.

Cllr Lane updated Members as follows:

- Additional steps have been installed by the PFO and two volunteers leading up to the kissing gate from Tunnel Lane to footpath going to the churchyard (OL12). These steps provide additional safety of access on, what was frequently a slippery, unsafe slope.
- Cllr Gittings and his wife Barbara – AFWG volunteers, cleared overgrowth on the footpath over Brimfield Brook leading to Bonfire Field (OL3).
- The PFO is researching number of PROWs which apparently disappeared from the local PROWs map as held by the Herefordshire Council. Update to follow in due course.
- PFO prepared a schedule of planned works and stiles replacements for next season with an aim to introduce more accessible kissing gates.
- Identifying owners where PROWs are crossing private land required, maps now available.

16. Documents retention & archives:

To authorise the Clerk to deposit recently discovered historical documents with Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre. In particular:

- Undated, presumed over 200+ years old, historical manuscript, *Poor Laws* recipients' list.
- The first *Acceptance of Office Declarations* book, including declarations of the first Orleton Parish Council elected Members, dated 1895 to 1966.
- Orleton Parish Council Accounts 1948 to 1968.
- Hand-written Minute Books:
 - I. 20th May 1952 – 26th March 1968
 - II. 26th May 1968 – 30th May 1977

APPROVED

17. Training

To approve Clerk's training – CiLCA, 3rd module.

APPROVED

18. Matters for discussion at the next meeting. (No discussion)

18.1 Review of times PC meetings are held.

18.2 Introduction of planting around the War Memorial

18.3 Review of herbicide spraying arrangement for next season.

19. Date of next meeting – 19th October 2023

CONFIRMED

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21:19

Signed - Chairman of the Council

Date