



ORLETON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Orleton Parish Council held on Thursday 18th April 2024 at 6:30pm at the Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors – Colin Mitchell (in the Chair), Barry Rogers, David Lane, Ron Gittings, Mark Simmons.

IN ATTENDANCE: Olena Hayward (Barrett) – Clerk, Cllr Dan Hurcomb – Bircher Ward representative (Herefordshire Council), Mr David Batten.

MINUTES

1. To receive apologies of absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Bishop (illness) and Powell (personal).

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

2.1 Cllr Lane declared an interest in item 9 of the agenda. His property stands to benefit from village-wide improvement in drainage and flood resilience, should the scheme be delivered.

2.2 The Proper Officer informed the PC that a request for dispensation on all matters pertaining to Flood Resilience Scheme (item 9) has been received from Cllr Lane, under S33 of the Localism Act and Orleton PC Standing Orders 13(d) & all. This request has been considered by the Proper Officer and the requested dispensation has been granted until 1st May 2027. The dispensation is to participate in discussions on items relating to flood resilience, but not to take part in voting. Details of the decision are contained in the *Declarations of Interests & Dispensations Register* of the Council and appended to these Minutes. – APPENDIX 1

3. To approve Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2024.

APPROVED as true and accurate record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

4. 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.

NONE.

5. Clerk's report

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

The Clerk **REPORTED** as follows:

5.1 Audit season for the Financial Year ended on 31st March 2024 has started. Annual Governance and Accountability Report Section 2 has been completed by the RFO and, together with all financial and other required documents, have now been submitted for Internal Audit. The PC will be updated on the outcome of the Internal Audit in due course.

- 5.2 Remittance advice for Part 1 of the Precept payment has been received from the Local Authority and the payment is expected imminently.
- 5.3 A 'thank you' letter was received from Orleton Evergreens, to express their gratitude for the grant awarded by this Council.
- 5.4 A 'thank you' letter was received from Wigmore High School for the PC contribution to the Students' Awards.
- 5.5 Supplies for the St. George's Parade have now been purchased and delivered to the organisers.
- 5.6 Expression of interest has been received for the position of Parish Tree Officer from a candidate with an impressive professional background. A recommendation for the appointment will be put to the PC at the next meeting.

6. Finance.

6.1 To note the bank balance – 31st March 2024

NOTED - £17,021.72

6.2 End of Financial Year 2023/24 report

- 6.2.1** *To receive the appointed Member's report on the verification of the 4th Quarter and End of Financial Year 2023/24 bank reconciliations.*

Pursuant to Financial Regulation 2.2 the appointed member REPORTED the conclusion of verification of accounts, financial statement, and bank reconciliations, as produced by the RFO for the 4th Quarter and End of FY 2023/24. No errors or irregularities were discovered. Relevant documents will be signed as evidence of verification once they are returned by the Internal Auditor.

- 6.2.2** To receive, consider and approve finance report & bank reconciliations for the 4th Quarter and End of financial year 2023/24, as produced by the RFO and verified by the appointed Member, including RFO's budget monitoring and YE surplus report.

The RFO reported as follows:

This has been a successful financial year for the Council with significant improvements in the PC financial management and oversight procedures and outcomes.

The balance at the end of FY was £17,021.72, as compared to previous FY balance of £11,902.53, with £5,119.19 build-up of Reserves. This constitutes a substantial improvement in the PC financial security and an increase of Reserves amounting to 43% on previous FY. This is on track with the plan put in place by the PC in the last FY and in accordance with the PC adopted Reserves Policy.

Earmarked Reserves Funds were established at the beginning of current FY, as per the PC Reserves Policy adopted on 21st September 2023. These are kept in a dedicated account, with a transfer from General Reserves of £2,250 made.

The most notable variations against budget were:

- A. Income - £51,619.22 vs budget £31,266.00. This is accounted for as follows.
 - a. Recovery of unclaimed VAT returns for the previous four FYs - £11,838.22, vs budget - Nil;
 - b. Successful grants bids, total - £2,300.00, vs budget - Nil;

- c. Receipt of grant from the reintroduction of the Local Authority's Lengthsman Grant Scheme - £4,686.00, vs budget – Nil.
- d. Miscellaneous income, including reimbursements - £1,529.00, vs budget – Nil.

Unanticipated income total (excluding Misc income) was - £18,824.22, constituting a 60.2% of the value of the Precept brought into the Parish by the PC and offsetting budget deficit.

- B. Costs - £46,500.03 vs budget £31,266.00. The most notable items were:
 - a. Repairs & maintenance (War Memorial refurbishment, etc.) - £3,499.00 vs budget £1,350.00
 - b. Meetings room hire - £610.00 vs budget £260.00
 - c. Public Works Loan repayments - £2,192.14 vs budget £2,000.00
 - d. Employment costs - £11,534.03 vs budget £5,400.00
 - e. Admin - £441.33 vs budget Nil
 - f. Website - £375.00 vs budget £250

These were partially offset by notable heads of expenditure coming under budget:

- Insurance - £663.90 vs budget £1,000.00
- Subscriptions/charges - £862.01 vs budget £1,000.00
- Training (Clerk & Cllrs) - £956.83 vs budget £2,070.00
- Footpaths (works) - £366.66 vs budget £800.00
- Flood resilience - £984.86 vs budget £1,500.00
- Elections - £1,766.48 vs budget £2,200.00

The RFO thanked the PC for their stewardship of public finances and restraint and good sense in setting the budget for current financial year. Councillors are reminded that regular budget vs expenditure monitoring throughout the financial year must be conducted to ensure the PC maintains proper budgetary discipline and keeps to the schedule on building up Reserves.

6.3 To note the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) statement and outstanding balance at 31st March 2024.

Outstanding balance on the Loan repayment was **NOTED** - £5,337.03

6.4 To note the opening of PC Reserves Account and transfer of £2,250

NOTED

6.5 To note the following (but not limited to) payments received:

Following receipts were **NOTED**

6.4.1 Lengthsman grant payment from Herefordshire Council - £1,723.00

6.4.2 Police and Crime Commissioner Safer Roads grant - £8,250.00

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

Following invoices were **APPROVED** for payment by BACS:

6.6.1 Leo Pest Control, March 2024 (additional collection) - £85.20

6.6.2 Autela Payroll Services, Q4 - £105.71

6.6.3 HALC, CiLCA training 23.03.2024 - £300

6.6.4 Travel & admin expenses - £24.84 + £261.88

6.6.5 PC Telephone - £10.00

6.6.6 PFO - £110.79

The Clerk informed the Council that it appears that the PC has fallen victim to a dishonest supplier, regarding an order of flags for the St. George's parade. An order placed through an online facility to the value of £61.93 has not been received and requests for a refund are being ignored. The supplies had to be sought through a different outlet, with the replacement order cost of £84.09, to ensure that the items are available for the St. George's Day celebrations. The Clerk will continue to pursue the refund via all means available.

6.7 To note following payments made:

NOTED

6.7.1 Clerk's salary for March 2024

6.7.2 Orleton Evergreens grant - £500

6.7.3 Wigmore High School donation - £40

7. Grants

7.1 To consider grant application submitted by Orleton PCC on behalf of Orleton History Group – Orleton at the time of the D-Day, £400

To be considered under special measures approved by the PC for D-Day anniversary events grants.

The application was considered and a grant of £400 was APPROVED with following conditions:

- Purchased supplies (display boards) to be made available to wider community following the end of the project. This can be achieved by donating the items to the Village Hall or making them available for wider use through the St. George's church.

7.2 To consider and approve Clerk's delegated authority to approve last minute grant requests for projects connected to D-Day 80th Anniversary events.

To authorise the Clerk to consider and approve last minute grants requests for the above purpose. This authority to be granted until 31st May 2024 and exercised in consultation with the Chairman.

APPROVED

8. Highways

8.1 S106 Orleton traffic calming project (HC-S106-099)

To receive an update from Cllr Bishop on the Orleton Traffic Calming project to be delivered from S106 monies.

The project, as presented to the PC at the meeting in March, has been approved by Highways Authority and tenders have been sent out for design works. This will be finalised as soon as possible. In the meantime the Highways Authority is working on the county-wide roads surfacing program, with a contractor already appointed. Some roads resurfacing is expected to be carried out in Orleton alongside the Traffic Calming project which will be ready for delivery when details of local resurfacing are known.

8.2 To agree preferred positions for additional SID points in the village

The following locations were identified as most desirable for new SID points and will be passed to the project Lead for feasibility assessment:

- a. Potential repositioning of the Portway SID point (B4361) to be closer to the Maidenhead Inn.
- b. Millbrook Way, past the bridge and facing traffic coming from Maidenhead direction (the bus stop area).
- c. Around Little Furlongs, facing traffic coming into the village (Copper Corner).
- d. B4361, entrance to the village coming from Richards Castle and facing the traffic coming in.
- e. Comberton, somewhere around the position of the B4362 SID currently in place but facing traffic coming opposite direction.

9. Orleton Flood Resilience Scheme – Highway flooding

To receive an update from Cllr Lane and agree next steps as appropriate.

Cllr Lane updated as follows:

- Presentation of the scheme proposal will be delivered at the Annual Parish meeting to make the public aware of what is planned;
- Feasibility meeting with Highways is necessary to assess whether the project is deliverable at the scale required to make positive impact, Cllr Hurcomb to facilitate;
- Meeting with the Chairman of ORA was held to establish the feasibility of required pipework to be accommodated on the Rec. Providing that practicalities of the delivery and other outstanding matters are resolved there will be no opposition from ORA Cttee.

10. Kings Road Sewage Pumping Station

To receive an update on complaint of breach of statutory duty submitted by the Parish Council.

Following the complaint an increased activity at the Pumping Station has been observed, with tankers arriving at the location. An acknowledgment of the complaint was received from the EA.

11. Lengthsman

11.1 To consider and approve the Lengthsman grant contract with Herefordshire Council, including the Annual Maintenance Schedule

APPROVED and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman and Clerk. Match funding sum of £1,038.00 was **APPROVED**.

11.2 To consider and approve the appropriate timing and frequency of herbicide spraying of pavements in the village.

May and August were **APPROVED** as best time to carry out herbicide spraying in the village.

12. Annual Parish Meeting

To note the Agenda for Annual Parish meeting and agree arrangements for the provision of refreshments.

Agenda for the Annual Parish meeting was NOTED.

Volunteers will be sought to facilitate the provision of refreshments. Clerk to purchase appropriate refreshments. Cllr Hurcomb offered to donate drinks and support the volunteers in serving refreshments on the day. This offer was gratefully accepted by the PC with thanks from the Chairman.

13. Representatives to outside bodies

To nominate a Trustee for ORA Committee.

Cllr Powell was confirmed as PC nominated Trustee to ORA Committee.

14. Defibrillators

To consider request for replacement key-safes for the village defibrillators.

Key safe for the defibrillator located at Doctors' Surgery needs a replacement. Cllr Gittings to research and recommend.

15. Telephone box refurbishment

To consider a request to supply paints for the refurbishment of the telephone box at an estimated cost of £120.

Expenditure up to £150 NET has been **APPROVED**.

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

16.1 Village Hall – to receive an update from Cllr Gittings.

- Grants for replacement of boiler and fuel tank have been successfully obtained and will cover the required works.

16.2 Orleton Recreation Association – to receive an update from Cllr Powell.

In Cllr Powell's absence the Chairman delivered following update:

- ORA AGM to be held next week. Residents applications for election to ORA Cttee may be submitted up to 2 days prior to the AGM;
- Quotes for pavilion refurbishment have not been received yet.

16.3 Highways – to receive an update from Cllr Bishop.

In Cllr Bishop's absence the item was deferred.

16.4 Land Drainage Group – to receive an update from Cllr Lane.

- Reports received about localised flooding in Deakins Lane, probably due to blocked drain. Clerk referred to the Locality Steward.
- Biannual meeting of Herefordshire Flood Groups will be held on 26th June @ 6pm.
- Community Signage Scheme training will be delivered locally by an officer from Herefordshire Council.

16.5 Footpaths – to receive an update from Cllr Lane.

- PFO program of works going apace with detailed updates published in the Grapevine.
- Tunnel Lane sign refurbished by the PFO, Mrs Shelia Bradford and Cllr Gittings.
- Green Lane sign may have to be replaced with modern heritage sign as the lost sign has not been located.

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

Cllr Hurcomb delivered an update. – APPENDIX 2

EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A resolution was passed, pursuant to 'Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960, c. 67, s. 1(2)', to exclude the members of the public from the meeting for the duration of the following items, due to confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

18. Employment

18.1 To note the Clerk's Notice of termination of employment and agree the final date.

Clerk's Notice of Termination of Employment was NOTED and ACCEPTED, with the final date AGREED to be 31st May 2024.

The Chairman and the Members thanked the Clerk for her service and dedication.

The Clerk thanked the Council and all its Members for their welcome and support during her time in the post and expressed her sadness for leaving. In particular she expressed her admiration for the exceptional community spirit in the Parish and remarkable levels of community engagement in local matters.

18.2 To consider advertising for the post of Clerk and RFO to the Council, agree conditions to be offered and next steps as appropriate.

It was RESOLVED to outsource the recruitment of new Clerk to HALC. Appropriate terms to be offered to the preferred candidate.

READMISSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

- Green Lane sign replacement – June meeting.

20. Date of next meeting

20.1 Annual Parish Meeting – 9th May 2024 @ 6pm

20.2 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council – 9th May 2024 @ 7pm

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8:30pm.

Signed – Chairman of the Council

Date