

OFFWELL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MONTHLY ORDINARY MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 10th APRIL 2024 AT 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: J. Tristram, T. Norris, D. Blackmore, P. Hopkins, C. Whithear

In Attendance: A Jenkins (Clerk)

Members of Public: 0

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Council meeting and outlined / reminded everyone of the Covid-19 measures which had been adopted for Council meetings.

OPEN SESSION

COUNCIL BUSINESS

1. To receive apologies for absence and to approve reasons given (LGA 1972 S.85 (1))

Cllrs.T. Pepper, A. Welch-Thornton & M. Norfolk.

DCC Cllr. M. Hartnell, EDDC Cllrs. P. Arnott & H. Parr

2. To receive any declarations of interest relating to items outlined in this agenda (this does not preclude the duty to declare further interests as applicable)

None

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th March 2024

The minutes were declared a true record of the proceedings, proposed by Cllr. Norris, seconded by Cllr. Blackmore, all in favour.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

The Clerk advised that he had requested for a road sweeper to clean North Combe Road and that the Highways Officer had said that he would inspect the road and arrange for it to be cleaned if required.

The Clerk had also the Highways Officer to take up the matter with the contractors and operators of the sewage/water treatment works to ensure that any HGVs travelling to their site do NOT use the lane from the Church and must use North Combe Road.

The Clerk reported that the that the road sign by the Church "Unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles" has now been turned round to face out onto the road.

5. Reports:

a) Police

None

b) District and County Councillors

The Clerk advised that DCC Cllr. Hartnell had written to advise that due to a change at his work he would be unable to attend the parish council meetings for a few months. He had sent the following Spring report:-

Devon awarded £5.3m for zero emission buses.

Devon is one of 25 councils across England to receive funding for cleaner, more modern, and more reliable buses as part of a £143m government investment. A fleet of 41 electric buses are set to take to the roads of Devon in Exeter, North Devon and Torridge by 2026. Stagecoach will be investing a further £15m into the project to roll out new EV buses and charging infrastructure.

Bus Improvement Plan match funding available for Parish bus shelters

Match funding is available for Parish Councils towards bus shelters as part of our funding for bus infrastructure improvements across the county. Projects need to be delivered by March 2025 and Parish Councils are expected to own and maintain the new shelter going forward. If you are interested please contact me directly.

More EV charging points on the way.

The Department of Transport has awarded Devon more than £7m of capital funding to support the delivery of thousands of publicly accessible EV charging points. The funding will specifically target areas where drivers have no off-street parking. Devon has received one of the largest allocations of funding in the country. The aim is to have 2000 more charging points by 2030.

Government cash support for Devon's special needs education

Devon has signed an agreement with government that will see an extra £95m of national funding set aside to reduce the deficit on special needs education. As I have reported previously, the SEND deficit has continued to grow at an unsustainable rate and is expected to reach £163m by the end of this financial year. Devon has put in place a SEND improvement plan that has been approved by the Department of Education and as a result the £95m funding has been secured. Initially Devon will contribute £10m towards the deficit this year, with £38m coming from government before the end of March, and the remaining cash being spread out over eight years.

County budget on track to break even.

Amid stories of councils going bankrupt, it is good news that Devon is on track to break even at the end of the financial year. Our revenue budget of just under £700m will effectively break even in April with a small overspend of £291k being forecast. There are still financial risks with adult social care and children and young people, however significant work is underway across the council to support these pressures.

The Clerk advised that EDDC Cllr. Parr had submitted her apologies as she had an EDDC meeting to attend but had sent the following report:-

The revised report on Green Wedges is expected to be on the agenda for the Strategic Planning Committee shortly. Cllrs were unwilling at an earlier meeting of SPC to agree the previously proposed 70% reduction in Green Wedges across East Devon.

The Peer Review Report will be presented to Council later this month.

Amongst other findings:

- A new Chief Executive is needed [the recruitment process has started];
 - Measures to assist Cabinet to work more effectively with Senior Officers;
 - Work around improving governance needs to continue and be seen through;
 - The council should resist the temptation to undertake further external reviews.
- Risks to the council highlighted by the peer review-

Housing Revenue Account & Stock Condition Survey;

Provision of culture and leisure;

Large predicted overspend on waste and recycling

The Council is finalising the Council Plan which will set the strategic framework for the council to deliver services and projects. Cabinet is expected to recommend it to Council at their meeting tonight.

c) Clerk

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's response to the Torbay and Devon Devolution Consultation (Devon County Council) had been submitted and that an acknowledgement had been received.

d) Highways Matters

1) 20mph

None

2) A35

The Clerk reported that the Clerk at Widworthy had advised that she had spoken to Jonny Hill the A35 route manager of National Highways.

He has agreed to come to a meeting for all the parishes with one of the engineers like before and will come up with some dates shortly

3) Bus Service

None

4) Other Highways matters

a) Cleave Lane – surface water

Nothing to report.

b) A35 – water drainage / surface water

Nothing to report

c) Road Patching works – Road from Offwell Cross to New Road Cross and Road from Colyton Cross to Brakenwood - Road closures on Thursday 11th and Friday 12th April 2024

The Clerk advised that he had sent out emails to everyone on the database notifying everyone of the road closures.

d) Temporary Road Closure -11th June 2024

Road from Axminster Road to Offwell Cross, Offwell

The Clerk advised that he had received advance notification of this road closure and will issue out the notice nearer the date.

e) Footpaths Report

Cllr. Tristram reported that the broken plank on the walkway near West Colwell has been repaired.

f) Any Other Reports

None

6. Correspondence

The Clerk reported that he had received a freedom of information request from a Parishioner for a complete breakdown of all income & expenditure by month for the last financial year & the projected one for this year. He said that he would shortly be replying with the requested information within the necessary response time period.

7. Finance

a) Current Financial Position

The Clerk reported that there is £6,240.05 in the general account and £3,137.82 in the CIL account.

b) Expenditure to be ratified

None

c) Expenditure to be approved for which bills have been received

- 1) Payment to A.Jenkins of £238.48 for the Clerk's net salary after tax/NIC deduction for the month of April (01/04/2024 to 29/04/2024)
 - 2) Payment to HMRC of £59.60 for PAYE
 - 3) Payment of £181.86 to DALC for 2024/25 DALC & NALC affiliation fees.
- Payments proposed by Cllr. Whithear, seconded by Cllr. Hopkins. All in favour.

8. Planning Applications

a) 24/0188/FUL – Lower Lodge, Offwell, Honiton E 9SA

Demolition of outbuildings, replacement garage, 2 storey rear extension and new access
Cllr. Norris proposed that the Parish Council object to this application, the reason being that the Parish Council consider that the proposed new access onto Ramsden Lane will be highly dangerous. The section of Ramsden Lane at this point is particularly narrow and the proposed entrance is close to the sharp blind bend. In addition there are already a number of existing entrances with poor visibility to private houses and this proposed new entrance would undoubtedly increase the road safety hazard to an unacceptable level.

The present vehicle access for Lower Lodge is off the entrance driveway to Offwell House and this leads to where the proposed replacement garage is planned and there appears to be reasonable and adequate parking space within the property curtilage close to the garage. In view of this, the Parish Council do not consider that the proposed new access onto Ramsden Lane is necessary or justified. The Parish Council would have no objection to the application if it was revised and the proposed entrance removed from the application.

Seconded by Cllr. Whithear, all in favour.

b) 24/0516/COU – Marwood house, Offwell EX14 9RW

Change of use from agricultural use to domestic garden use

Cllr. Blackmore proposed that the Parish council support this application. Seconded by Cllr. Hopkins, the majority in favour.

c) 24/0506/FUL – Glanville Farm, Offwell. EX14 9ST

Construction of earth lined slurry lagoon with security perimeter fence

Cllr. Hopkins proposed that the Parish Council support this application, seconded by Cllr. Blackmore, all in favour.

d) 24/0132/DOC (21/1798/FUL) - Land On The East Side Of Tower Road Offwell Honiton

Change of use of an existing agricultural building and associated works for use as a Livestock Collection Centre. Application to discharge the planning conditions

The Clerk reported that following the meeting on 20th March when the Parish Council had resolved to submit a detailed report, that the following detailed comments had been submitted to Planning:-

Offwell Parish Council has considered the documents submitted by Stags, the applicants in connection with their application 24/0132/DOC (Discharge of conditions for 21/1798/FUL.

The applicant is clearly in contravention of the conditions of Grant of Planning Permission for 21/1798/FUL and the Parish Council wish to submit the following detailed comments:-
Condition 4

This refers to the construction of 2 passing bays and associated works. These were constructed prior to the required details being supplied and the condition states clearly that the site should not be used as a livestock centre until the required details were supplied.

The site has been in use on a Monday morning since the beginning of 2024.

The Ecology Assessment is dated 5 May 2023 and clearly states that the bays were constructed in the winter prior to May 2023. It also refers to drawings P06 rev P1 and P07 rev P1 which are dated December 2023.

In addition, the drawing P06 rev P1 shows the 'north' passing bay with a gradient sloping onto the road surface with no provision for drainage. Furthermore, STAGS reply to this stating 'there is no ditch/other drainage network at this point.'

The net affect of this gradient is that earth is being washed down onto the road surface and can and has blocked the road drain outside the entrance to Broad Park. This fact has been pointed out on numerous occasions by both local residents and the Parish Council. This passing bay needs to be reconstructed with a gradient sloping toward the bank to mitigate earth wash onto the road.

Furthermore it has taken the applicant 2 years to provide the required information since being granted planning permission.

Condition 5

This refers to the Vehicle Circulation route. This condition clearly stated that it should be constructed in accordance with drawing P02 rev P13. This drawing clearly shows the surface to the rear of the Collection Centre, the east side, to be a concreted surface. This was a requirement from DCC Highways to prevent mud and detritus being shed on the public highway and making it unsafe.

However, the newly issued drawing P02 rev P14 shows this now to be a Permeable Surface-Stone.

This is a clear violation of the Grant of Planning Permission and does not comply with DCC Highways concerns. Also, Condition 5 clearly states that use of the Collection Centre shall not commence until the Circulation Route is constructed according to drawing P02 rev 13. It has been in use on Monday mornings since the beginning of 2024.

Condition 6

This clearly states that 'No development shall take place??. in relation to hedgerow removal until an ecological assessment report?.has been submitted??'

Again, the applicant has carried out the works in contravention of the Grant of Planning Permission. This is also pointed out in the Ecology Assessment. In addition, it has taken the applicant 2 years to provide the required report.

Condition 7 Landscaping Scheme including Signage

This states that 'No development shall take place until a landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority;'

In addition, the applicant provides details of signage after it was installed earlier this year. The applicant has once again contravened the Grant of Planning Permission.

Condition 8

It was a requirement that the applicant had to provide further details of the surface water drainage strategy and methods of attenuating surface water run-off, to mimic greenfield run-off rates prior to commencement of development, other than that related to the provision of the passing bays. This was to ensure surface water drainage is appropriately managed within the site in accordance with policy EN22 (Surface Run-off Implications of New Development) of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 and guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Frameworks and associated Planning Practice Guidance.

The Parish Council note that the applicant wants this withdrawn from the current application and that they will lodge further details at a later date.

Judging by their performance to date, might we have to wait until 2026 or later for that information to be supplied. I suspect it will never be forthcoming!

We also note that drawings P02 rev P14 and P05 rev P5 Drainage Details do not appear on the Planning Portal although STAGS quote these in their Discharge of Conditions correspondence.

This is another breach of the Grant of Planning Permission, also impacting on the local environment and the collection centre cannot be allowed to operate without the drainage plan being in operation.

Other Issues

The drawing P02 Rev P13 shows an 84,000 litre effluent tank in the north west corner of the Unloading Bays. This now seems not to be present on the latest version drawing P02 rev P14.

Does the effluent tank exist or been constructed? The Parish council understood that the effluent tank was a major and critical requirement for the site and its operations.

The Parish Council understood that a Livestock Collection Centre was required for bio security reasons to be a completely ring fenced unit with no entrances into it from adjoining farmland and Farm buildings. Whilst a fence has been erected around the collection centre, large gates have been installed allowing access from and to the adjoining farmland and farm building. We believe that this is contrary to the national official rules and regulations governing livestock collection centre premises and is also contrary to the original site plans submitted to EDDC.

In Summary the applicant has shown a blatant disregard of the Grant of Planning Permission and has blatantly ignored and been in breach of the planning conditions for almost two years.

It has taken them 2 years to provide the required information while proceeding with the development where the conditions unequivocally state that no development must commence until the required documents were supplied and approved.

In addition, the Livestock Collection Centre has been in use on Monday mornings from the beginning of this year.

The breaches of the planning conditions have been reported to EDDC by the Parish Council over the last 2 years but EDDC have taken no effective enforcement action and allowed the applicants to blatantly ignore the conditions.

EDDC must consider what message this sends to the residents of East Devon. Does it perhaps mean that EDDC will not enforce any conditions of a Grant of Planning Permission allowing applicants to just ignore the conditions and proceed as they see fit.

The Parish Council trusts that EDDC will now take their responsibilities seriously considering each and every contravention of the planning conditions ensuring that all the works and issues comply with the original plans and requirements/conditions.

b) 23/0735/FUL – Land North Of Honiton Golf Course Northleigh Hill Road Honiton

The construction of use of a Youth football facility, including clubhouse, parking, storage and football pitches to suit all age groups

The Clerk advised nothing to report.

9. Electricity Sub Station – Removal of unsightly Tree stumps and planting of hedge

The Clerk reported that the Feoffees had confirmed their funding donation of £800 towards the project and that the Chairman and himself had given the contractor instructions to proceed with the works and planting with the 40-60cm saplings. It is expected that the works and planting will be completed in the next 3 weeks.

10. Replacement Laptop

Deferred to next meeting

11. Annual Council Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting

Resolved that the two meetings will be held on the same evening with the Annual Parish Meeting taking place after the Annual Council meeting.

12. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Replacement Laptop

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Annual Council Meeting 22nd May 2024 at 7.00pm

Annual Parish Meeting 22nd May 2024 following after the Council Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed

Date