

# OFFWELL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE REMOTELY HELD PARISH COUNCIL MONTHLY ORDINARY MEETING ON MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2020 AT 7.30PM

via Zoom platform as per legislation contained within section 79 of the Coronavirus Act 2020

**Present:** Cllrs. C. Whithear (Chair), P. Hopkins, J. Tristram, P. Sauvage  
M. Mulrain

(remotely)

**In Attendance:** A Jenkins (Clerk), EDDC Cllr. H. Parr

(remotely)

**Members of Public:** 2

The Chair welcomed Councillors, to the Council's Zoom virtual remote meeting, made necessary by the current CV-19 situation which requires social distancing measures. He advised Councillors that the meeting is being recorded but that the recording will be erased once the draft minutes of the meeting are approved at the next meeting.

### OPEN SESSION

No matters raised

### COUNCIL BUSINESS

**1. Apologies**

Cllr. M. Brake & DCC Cllr. M. Shaw

**2. Declaration of Interests**

None

**3. Minutes of the Meetings held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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

**4. Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Clerk advised that the new noticeboards had been ordered with an expected delivery towards the end of January but that was dependent on the Covid 19 situation. A planning

application had been submitted to EDDC for the Cleave community noticeboard. The application fee was £117.00.

The Chair advised that the new Christmas lights had been installed and lit.

## 5. **Councillor vacancies**

The Clerk advised that due to the pending Christmas/ New Year period, the present Covid 19 situation and because the new website was in the process of being designed, he had not readvertised the vacancies. He would readvertise in January when the new website was launched but felt that the best way to attract applicants, was for Councillors to speak to parishioners and encourage them to consider applying. The Clerk had spoken to quite a few people himself and that was how Cllr. Sauvage had been encouraged to apply.

## 6. **Reports**

### a) **Police**

PCSO England had advised that he was now the only PCSO covering both Honiton Town and Honiton Rural (all the parishes), and that this was reducing his ability to be able to issue regular crime reports to each parish. They were now planning to use volunteers to assist with the reports.

Honiton Police are now issuing Police Newsletters which also include crime report numbers but only under the categories of Honiton Town and Honiton Rural. They do not show the crimes for each parish.

PCSO England hoped to be able to issue a yearly crime report in January.

### b) **District and County Councillors:**

EDDC Cllr. Parr reported that the EDDC would be meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> January to consider the draft budget for 2021/22 with a further budget meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. There is a requirement on them to set a balanced budget. The additional services and costs incurred because of the Coronavirus pandemic and the necessary measures EDDC had to introduce will be a consideration in their budget deliberations.

DCC Cllr. Shaw had also sent a report which the Clerk had circulated to all Councillors.

### c) **Clerk – New Website**

The Clerk reported that work on the new website was progressing but that it had been necessary to renew the hosting plan for the existing website for a further month until the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

It was planned that the new website would be launched mid January.

The Clerk advised that a digital online mapping package ‘Parish Online’ that had been specifically designed for Councils was available. It was used by many parish councils and Kilminster Parish Council had been using it for over a year. The mapping was extremely detailed and zoomable and was licence based on official Ordnance Survey and aerial photography data. The Clerk said that Kilminster PC had found it extremely useful for considering planning applications and other matters. Recently the standard package had been extended to provide at no extra cost the facility to include a Public Access zoomable and highly detailed map on Council websites.

The subscription cost was based on the population size of a Parish and the annual cost for Offwell Parish is £60.00 with a discounted price of £54.00 for the first year.

The Clerk recommended that the Council consider subscribing as the Public Access Map on the new website would be an extremely important and useful feature for parishioners, visitors and others to use. The Clerk would have the ability to insert into this map layers of information.

Cllr. Tristram proposed, seconded by Cllr. Hopkins that Council proceed to subscribe to the Parish Online service. All in favour.

**d) Offwell Neighbourhood Support Group**

Cllr. Whithear & Cllr. Mulrain advised nothing to report at present. The support group was ready and prepared to offer support and Lynn Whithear is the contact point for anyone wanting support.

**e) Highways Matters**

Councillors reported a number of problems.

Cllr. Hopkins advised that no repair works had been carried out at the junction of Fern Lane and the A35 where the side of the road is collapsing. The collapse is getting worse.

It was also reported that a road sign was laying in the field alongside the road at and that it needed to be reerected.

Cllr. Tristram advised that just uphill from Bagwells Cottage in Mill Lane, running water has scoured out under the road. A traffic cone had been placed on the site.

The Clerk to contact the Highways Officer and advise him of these matters.

Council resolved that the Council's highways representatives be changed to Cllr. Sauvage and Cllr. Tristram.

**f) Any Other Reports**

None

**7. To consider any matters pertaining to Coronavirus and Offwell Parish**

The Chair said that everyone appeared to be following the rules and being careful.

**8. Correspondence**

The Clerk advised that an email had been received of further National Protection Zone Regulations in respect of Avian Flu. The Clerk was not aware of any outbreaks of Avian Flu In Devon since the Dawlish incident.

The Clerk reported that he had received an email from Mrs Richards advising the current position on the new playground. She had advised that everything is ready to deliver, they had paid the deposit. The landscaping contractors doing the groundworks were doing the work free of charge and they had received from Dares several loads of topsoil free of charge. The groundworks had started in September but work then had to cease due to the weather conditions. They are hoping that work will be able to continue in the New Year but do not expect that the new playground will be completed before the Spring. They are continuing to raise money for the project.

## **9. Finance**

### **a) Current Financial Position**

The Clerk reported that there is £9,664.69 in the current account (not allowing for the 9b payments below but does include the £1,000 grant from Cllr. Shaw's locality fund towards the new noticeboards).

There is now £1,112.09 in the CIL Account following the payment of £2,250 to Design Create Play Ltd., the Playground equipment supplier. It should be noted that the Council has resolved to make a payment of £1,100 from the CIL monies towards the purchase of the new noticeboards

### **b) Expenditure to be approved**

- 1) Payment of £318.72 for the Clerk's salary for the month of December 2020
- 2) Payment of £14.39 to A Jenkins (Clerk) Reimbursement for ZOOM IT Platform Monthly Charge purchased on Clerk's personal card)
- 3) Payment of £18.85 to A Jenkins (Clerk) Reimbursement for renewal of the web hosting for 1 month up to the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021. (purchased on Clerk's personal card)
- 4) Payment of £ 55.98 to C. Whithear Reimbursement for purchase of Christmas lights  
Proposed by Cllr. Tristram, seconded by Cllr. Hopkins, all in favour.

### **c) Budget & Precept**

The Clerk presented his report.

The document (copy attached to these minutes), showed the budget for 20/21, the spend to date, the projected end of year figures together with a potential draft 2021/22 budget for Councillors. consideration and approval.

The Projected year spend amount by the end of the financial year on the 31-03-2021 is £9163 which compares favourably with the budget of £7,428 considering the two major purchases which were not allowed for in the budget

The two major purchases being a) the cost of engaging professional website designers to design a new website and b) the purchase of a new Parish Council noticeboard and Village Notices noticeboard to replace the existing noticeboards which have deteriorated and are no longer fit for purpose.

Both of these purchases whilst not envisaged or budgeted for last year were essential as the display of and the ability of the public to easily access official and other information is important. This has become very much more important during the pandemic. The costs whilst substantial are an investment for future years. With regard to the noticeboards the cost has been mitigated by the grant from DCC Cllr. Shaw and by using CIL monies as the noticeboards are an approved infrastructure purchase under the CIL regulations.

Some of the projected spends were below budget and others did not occur such as any ditch works.

This projection would result in a year end balance of £3,652 but there would be a substantial VAT recovery of £800 to be made from the Noticeboards purchase and the earlier purchase of the playground item from the CILmonies.

The budget for 2020/21 is £7,108. Incorporated in the budget is a figure of £650 for the Website in order for all updating of information to be done by the website designers. They have quoted a monthly charge of £50 per month for posting any new information, documents etc that we require posted on the website.

No amount has been incorporated in the budget for ditch work, as we didn't engage a contractor last year and the advice from Highways is that clearing of ditches is the responsibility of the landowner.

In considering budgets and setting the precept the Council always need to consider the amount they wish to take from their reserves (projected year-end balance) to set a reasonable and considered precept.

Last year the Council decided to take a figure of £1,400 from reserves, which resulted in a precept of £6,028. Although this resulted in the precept rising from £5,287 in the previous year, the Council made this decision in order to maintain a prudent and adequate level of reserves. However, the increase did result in complaints from Parishioners.

There is an understanding that Parish Councils try to mitigate the need for precept increases by measures such as the use of reserves etc.

The Clerk said that if Council accept the proposed budget and wish to maintain the precept at last year's figure of £6,028, an amount of £1,080 would have to be drawn from reserves in order to achieve that wish. Whilst it may be more prudent to consider drawing less from reserves, this would need to be considered against the burden on residents of increasing the budget in what is a very difficult and worrying time for many.

Council thanked the Clerk for his work in producing the report and draft budget forecast. Councillors discussed the budget and precept and the matters raised by the Clerk.

Cllr. Tristram proposed accepting the budget for 2021/22, that an amount of £900 be drawn from reserves to support the budget and that the precept be set at £6,208. (An increase of 3% on the previous year. Cllr. Mulrain seconded, all in favour. The Clerk to submit the completed precept form to EDDC.

**d) Change of Bank Signatories**

The Clerk advised that Cllr. Whithear and Cllr. Brake had now been added as signatories. He would now obtain forms to be completed for ex Cllr. Small to be removed and for Cllr. Hopkins, Cllr. Tristram and Cllr. Sauvage to be added.

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**10. Planning applications**

**20/2729/FUL - Spring Hayne Offwell Honiton EX14 9SL**

Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays

Council resolved to support the application. Proposed by Cllr. Whithear, seconded by Cllr. Sauvage, all in favour.

**11. Grit Bins**

Cllr. Whithear asked the Clerk to establish what happened about the damaged grit bin by the Village Hall.

Cllr. Tristram to check the grit bins located in the parish and to advise the Clerk of the number and location in order that a map can be drawn up. Also to advise of locations where a grit bin would be desirable.

**12. Snow Warden**

The Clerk said that at the time of his resignation, ex Cllr. Small had told the Clerk that he would temporarily continue as the Snow Warden for the time being until the Council appointed someone else. Councillors asked the Clerk to speak to him again and ask if he would continue for a longer time.

**13. Council Meeting dates for 2021**

Council agreed the following dates

January Monday 18 <sup>th</sup>	July Monday 19 <sup>th</sup>
February Monday 15 <sup>th</sup>	August Monday 16 <sup>th</sup>
March Monday 15 <sup>th</sup>	September Monday 20 <sup>th</sup>
April Monday 19 <sup>th</sup>	October Monday 18 <sup>th</sup>
May Monday 17 <sup>th</sup>	November Monday 15 <sup>th</sup>
June Monday 21 <sup>st</sup>	December Monday 13 <sup>th</sup>

**14. Agenda items for next meeting**

None

**15. Date and Time of next meeting**

The next Zoom meeting will be on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed..... Date.....