

**OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th March 2021**

**Councillors present:** John Gale, Alan Johansen, Guy Holland Bosworth, Helyn Dudley and Sylvia Pettitt

**Also present:** Joanne Kirk (Clerk), County Councillor Mary Evans and District Councillor Mike Chester.

**Open Forum**

No issues were raised during the Open Forum.

**1. Acceptance of apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Geoff Ingham and Chris Ridge and the reason for absences accepted.

**2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda and dispensation requests**

No councillors declared an interest in items on the agenda. No dispensation requests were received.

**3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The chairman then signed them.

**4. County Councillor's Report**

County Councillor Mary Evans had sent a written report prior to the meeting which has been published on the Parish Council website. She spoke about the following:

- Flooding near the Fox Inn
- Highways. SCC has one million pounds for pothole repairs and the money for drainage has been doubled. She would like a list of outstanding Highways issues for Ousden.

As this was Mary Evans' last meeting as County Councillor for Ousden, the Parish Council thanked her for all her hard work and support over the years and wished her well in her retirement. The replacement conservative councillor is Bobby Bennett.

**5. District Councillor's Report**

District Councillor Mike Chester sent a written report prior to the meeting which has been published on the Parish Council website.

Mike Chester was asked if he knows why Ousden Village Hall's Community Chest application was unsuccessful. He explained that the fund was massively oversubscribed so they focused on projects which would immediately benefit people post COVID. He will support Ousden Village Hall if they reapply.

**6. Police issues**

No police issues were raised. There has been some fly tipping on the road between Ousden and Hargrave which has been reported.

**7. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting**

- The missing post for the VAS is on the Highways list for installation after the May elections.
- The missing black roses have been returned to the grave in St Barnabas. The owner is very thankful and grateful. The clerk agreed to put something in the Ousden News.

**Actions to be completed in the spring:**

Clearing lichen from the circular oak bench in the spring
Painting the circular oak bench in the spring
Replace the slats on the circular bench – two need replacing
Clean village sign in the spring

**8. Finance**

**a) Approval of any payments and signing of the Schedule of Payments**

**b) It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:**

- Risby PC – print cartridge (1/7) – LGA 1972, s111 - **£6.18**

- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 – **£1.83**

Sylvia Pettitt agreed to sign the Schedule of Payments after the meeting. The Chairman agreed to countersign it after the meeting.

**c) Approval of payments authorised between meetings**

No payments were authorised between meetings.

**d) Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting**

**Receipts**

Lloyds Bank - bank interest received	0.05
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**Payments**

EDF - electricity St Barnabas	£8.00
Risby Parish Council - shredding of PC documents	£6.67
EDF - electricity St Barnabas	£8.00
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook	

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

**e) Bank balances and confirmation of bank reconciliation as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Lloyds Bank Current Account	£530.64
Lloyds Bank reserve account	£5,710.99
<b>Total in Banks</b>	<b>£6,241.63</b>

Sylvia Pettitt agreed to verify and sign the bank statements after the meeting.

**f) Councillor to complete the checklist of internal controls**

Sylvia Pettitt agreed to sign the checklist of internal controls after the meeting.

**g) Review of regular payments including the clerk's salary and approve payments relating to these services for 2021-22**

It was resolved the following regular payments would continue to be paid in 2021 – 22:

Payment	2020/21 - Amount ex VAT	2021/22 - Amount ex VAT
<b>Admin costs</b>		
Village Hall rental - amount may vary depending on number of meetings	£50	£50
Community Action Suffolk - Insurance	£339	£339
SALC subscription	£141	£150
Internal audit fee	£65	£65
Scribe accounting software	£58	£129
Risby Parish Council - phone costs	£24	£21
Stationery (print cartridges - shared cost)	£20	£20
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£50	£50
ICO - data protection fee	£35	£35
<b>Maintenance costs</b>		
Grass cutting	£660	£660
Hedge cutting	£60	£70
<b>Other payments</b>		
Consumables for defibrillator - amount may vary	£100	£100
EDF - electricity St Barnabas	£100	£100

<b>Staff costs</b>		
Staff costs as per confidential cash book (salary costs, PAYE and pension costs)		

**h) Review of income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget and the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure**

Councillors reviewed the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget. At year-end Ousden Parish Council will have a budget deficit of £507 as detailed in the budget summary below:

**Budget Summary 2020 - 2021**

<b>Budget Summary 2020 - 2021</b>	
<b>Receipts</b>	
Budgeted	£8,098
Actual	£8,131
<b>Difference</b>	<b>£33</b>
<b>Payments</b>	
Budget	£7,992
Actual	£8,532
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-£540</b>
<b>Predicted over (+) /underspend (-)</b>	<b>-£507</b>
<b>Expenditure not included in the budget</b>	
Phone box refurbishment	£520

**Reserves**

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>Transfers</b>	<b>Spend</b>	<b>Receipts</b>	<b>Current Balance</b>
<b>Earmarked</b>					
Election costs	£600	£50	£0	£0	£650
Emptying of bins	£225	£0	£0	£0	£225
Defibrillator maintenance	£120	-£81	£0	£0	£39
Clerk and councillor training	£10	£30	£0	£0	£40
<b>TOTAL EARMARKED</b>	<b>£955</b>	<b>-£1</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£954</b>
<b>RESERVES</b>					
<b>GENERAL RESERVES</b>					£5,020
<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>					<b>£5,974</b>

Estimated reserve as of 31/03/21: £5,974 which includes earmarked funds of £954. The general reserve is within the recommended guidelines of no more than one year's annual precept.

**i) Review of the confidential cashbook (PAYE and salary information)**

Sylvia Pettitt agreed to review the clerk's Confidential Cashbook and confirm that the PAYE details and tax code were correct after the meeting.

**j) Review the register of fixed assets and insurance values and check that the level of insurance cover is adequate**

Councillors reviewed the assets register. No new assets were purchased in 2020 – 21: The Parish Council's current asset value is £34,841. Councillors felt that the current insurance values for the noticeboards and bus shelter were too low. It was resolved that the clerk and Chairman would be authorised to review the insurance values and increase them to a more realistic level.

**k) Review the Council's risk assessment**

It was resolved that no amendments were necessary. The Chairman then signed it.

**l) Review of the levels of liability insurance**

The levels of liability cover under the new Parish Protect Policy are as follows:

All Risks/	Public Liability	Officers Indemnity	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Business Interruption	Personal Accident	Employers' Liability
£5k	£10m	£500K	£25k	£5k	£25k	£10m

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover were adequate.

**m) Appointment of an internal auditor to check the Council's system of internal controls and review the effectiveness of the internal audit. The internal auditor must be independent from the Parish Council.**

It was resolved that Cathy Whitaker, clerk to Exning Parish Council, would be appointed as internal auditor this year and that a fee of £65 would be paid. The Council reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit. It was resolved that the internal audit was effective and that audit regulations would be met for the following reasons:

- Does the internal audit sufficiently cover all aspects of the financial controls relevant to the council (for example risk management, detection of fraud, internal controls) and are terms of reference in place and approved? Yes, Financial Regulations. New Financial Regulations were introduced on 1st May 2014 to introduce procedures to detect fraud once electronic banking is introduced. A checklist of internal controls is completed by an account signatory at every meeting to verify payments on bank statements against actual payments as listed in the accounts to ensure that there are no discrepancies.
- Is the internal auditor independent (i.e. does not have any role within the Council)? Yes. The internal auditor does not have a role within the Council.
- Is the internal auditor competent to carry out their work ethically, with integrity and objectivity? Is there any evidence to suggest that this may not be the case? Yes, she is a parish council clerk and RFO for Newmarket Town Council. There is no evidence to suggest that she will not carry out the work ethically, with integrity and objectivity.
- Is the Responsible Officer consulted in the internal audit plan? Yes.
- Are the responsibilities of members of the Council understood and has the necessary training been undertaken? Yes
- Is there a plan in place for when the internal audit will be undertaken and does the plan properly take account of corporate risk? The internal audit will take place in April 2021 prior to the accounts being approved at the Annual Meeting on 10th May 2021. The internal auditor's report will be presented to the Parish Council at this meeting and any issues raised by the internal auditor will be discussed at the meeting and an action plan produced.

**n) Review the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls**

The following internal controls are in place:

- At each meeting a councillor checks bank statements against the Parish Council's accounts to ensure that transactions correspond and that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statement
- Where possible payments are approved at meetings and a Schedule of Payments is prepared which is checked by two councillors. Corresponding invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the same time.
- Regular payments are approved at the March meeting and the invoices paid when they are received. These invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the next meeting after they have been paid.
- The chairman rules off and signs the Schedule of Payments so that no amendments can be made after the meeting.
- Cheques must be signed by two signatories along with the corresponding invoice.
- A record of online payments is kept and checked at each meeting.
- If a supplier changes their bank details, the supplier must supply a written hard copy notifying the change.

It was resolved that these controls are adequate and are working well.

- o) To nominate a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2021 and complete the inspection checklist.**

It was resolved that John Gale would inspect the Council's property and report back at the next meeting.

## **9. Planning issues**

### **a) Anglian Water Bexwell to Bury pipeline**

It was resolved that the clerk and Chairman would be authorised to prepare a response on behalf of the Parish Council and query the proposed route of the pipeline from Lady's Green to Woodditton, the location of the pumping station at Lady's Green and where storage areas will be located.

### **b) DC/21/0033/FUL - Land adjacent to 1 The Hill, Ousden - One dwelling**

It was resolved that no objections would be made to this application, however the following comments would be submitted:

- The Parish Council requests that robust planning conditions are put in place if the property is being built due to the site's position on a 1 in 10 hill, which also has a double bend and is very narrow. The road is busy at times with a large number of HGVs coming through the village. Lorries parking on The Hill will cause a hazard as will mud from any excavation work. Any mud on the road needs to be cleared daily by the builders. There should also be a Traffic Management Scheme in place to ensure that the safety of road users and pedestrians is protected.
- There is only a narrow footway on this section of The Hill, so pedestrians will be forced to walk on the road if the footway is blocked, therefore measures should be put in place to provide a safe route for pedestrians. There are a lot of steep driveways nearby and safe access to and from these properties also needs to be maintained.
- The Parish Council would like to make the Planning Authority aware that flooding occurred from the ditch at the bottom of the site in 2014 when two neighbouring properties were flooded to a depth of 1m inside.

### **c) Email from NALC about a new Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the creation of a National Model Design code**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

It was resolved that no comments would be submitted.

## **10. Highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues**

### **a) Overgrown section of the Three Villages Walk**

It was resolved that the clerk would contact the Rights of Way Officer James Pickerin to find out what progress has been made since the meeting in December.

### **b) Update on the Quiet Lanes Project and possible funding**

The three nominated lanes have been accepted. As the routes cross the Wickhambrook parish boundary, Wickhambrook Parish Council has been contacted. They are supportive of the project. Funding is available from Suffolk County Council to cover the cost of posts and signs. The routes will be in wave two of the project.

### **c) Quiet Lanes public consultation**

Information about the Quiet Lanes Project has been published on the Parish Council website and residents have been consulted via the Parish newsletter. No residents attended the meeting. One negative response has been received by email relating to signage and cost.

## **11. Draft Scheme of Delegation**

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has advised parish councils to have a Scheme of Delegation in place to mitigate the impact on meetings having to be cancelled in future due to COVID or any other reason to ensure that parish councils can continue to function.

It was resolved that one amendment would be made to the Scheme of Delegation. The following bullet point would be added: *To manage any ongoing contracts. Material changes to contracts can only be made at meetings.*

It was resolved that the amended Scheme of Delegation would be approved and loaded onto the Parish Council website.

**12. Village issues:**

**a) Possibility of carrying out a village wildlife project.**

Four people have volunteered to become part of a wildlife group. Sylvia Pettitt will investigate the cost of providing seeds for residents.

**b) Review of lorry traffic through the village**

It was resolved that no action would be taken but the Parish Council will continue to monitor the amount of lorry traffic through the village.

**13. Dates of meetings in 2021/22**

- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council followed by the Annual Parish Meeting
- Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021
- Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021
- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022
- Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Remote meetings are only allowed until 7<sup>th</sup> May. After that face-to-face meetings will have to take place which follow COVID guidelines. Councillors will need to sit 2m apart as will any members of the public and everyone will have to wear masks. The Government is being lobbied to allow parish councils to continue to hold remote meetings.

**14. Correspondence:**

**a) Email from CAB requesting a donation**

It was resolved that no donation would be made.

**b) Email from Arthritis Action giving information about support which is available for people with arthritis – for information only**

It was resolved that the information would be uploaded onto the website.

**15. Any other business for noting or including on the next agenda**

A number of road signs need replacing in Ousden. The Chairman agreed to report them via Suffolk County Council's online reporting tool.

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.41pm**

Signed ..... (Chairman) Dated .....