

OULTON : ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: MINUTES

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Oulton held in the Old Congregational Chapel, Oulton on Tuesday 14 May 2019 the following were present:

Mr P Killingback – Chairman of Oulton Parish Council

Thirteen members of the public

In attendance:

Mr D Harrison (County and District Councillor), Mr S Riley (District Councillor)

and Mr L Mills – Clerk of Oulton Parish Council

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from PC P Magee, Ms H Bailey and Mr A Dawson (National Trust), Mr G Peck, Mr A Windross

2. Minutes

The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2018, having been circulated, were accepted as correct and signed by the Chairman

4. Chairman's report

8 Meetings of the Parish Council were held during year.

Planning: Street Farm 2200 tonne Potato Store. This major development right on the edge of The Street remains a major concern for the PC in view of the potential noise, lighting and HGV traffic implications for nearby residents. The PC, with the support of the District Councillors, requested that this application should be determined by the full Broadland District Council Planning Committee rather than a Planning Officer. As part of the detailed preparation The PC took the decision to have an independent Noise Assessment Report produced. Much of the cost of this was paid for from donations from concerned Street residents for which the PC is very grateful. Using data from the application, thorough analysis was carried out and a detailed and passionate presentation was made to the Planning Committee. Unfortunately, the very real differences in the two differing Noise Assessments did not appear to be appreciated by the Committee and as a result, the Planning Application was passed and building on the site appears to have started. The PC will be monitoring the potential noise from his building once in operation. The other main significant work of the PC this year has been in respect of the two windfarm projects - Orsted/Vattenfall. These two projects are both going through a centralised Planning Process with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Orsted (who propose to use the old airfield as their Main Construction Compound) are a couple of months ahead of Vattenfall (who will be using The Hangar site). Both of these major infrastructure projects have required our attendance at a number of formal Planning Inspectorate Hearings and our involvement has required us to make formal submissions to the process at specific deadline dates. In addition there have been Working Party meetings held in Oulton. To date, OPC has had to attend some 14 meetings and provide 9 detailed deadline submissions in respect of Orsted, and held 6 meetings with Vattenfall and provided 8 detailed deadline submissions for Vattenfall to date – with a future submission due shortly.

The examination process for Orsted has now closed to allow the Examination Panel to produce their report to be presented to the Secretary Of State for Energy. Vattenfalls examination period will close at the beginning of June. All of this work has largely been done within the PC by a Working Group of myself, Alison Shaw and Susan Mather. I am extremely grateful to both of them for the detailed analysis and persistence throughout a difficult and technically challenging process and very proud of the quality of the technical arguments put forward – all of which are available on the PC website. I encourage you all to look at these. It proves that ‘little’ old Oulton can punch well above its weight. The implications for all of Oulton (not just The Street) of these two projects going ahead at around the same time – in terms of HGV traffic, lighting, noise and out of hours working are huge. Some neighbouring parishes have only recently woken up to these issues and as a result of OPC’s attendance we now have a combined strength that is challenging the whole basis of these projects – namely why dig up Norfolk for each windfarm to connect to inshore sub-stations? Other countries have successfully utilised Offshore Ring Mains (ORM) to connect windfarms and OPC has been lobbying for this option to be included within the two Planning Inspectorate reports.

Other Planning Matters for the year:

Meeting House Farm. The PC supported the rebuilding and conversion of a farm building to a home office.

The Old Chapel, The Street: Some very recent amendments to the conversion plans have just been received. Conversion work on this building has yet to start, but the PC supports the idea of this being made into a residential property to bring additional life into The Street.

Village Gates: With the assistance of grant monies made available through District Councillor David Harrison, the PC was finally able to obtain two sets of village gates at each end of The Street. These will, I hope reduce the speed of vehicles.

Village Pond: During last year’s very hot dry summer the pond in The Street completely dried up. This put a number of large fish in danger. Luckily Keith and Ksynia called upon the RSPCA and with the assistance of Steve Hagon and the NT, some 25(?) fish were temporarily housed in the Blicking Hall fountain over the winter. They have now been returned to this and the Wood Farm pond and hopefully will continue to thrive. The very recent (unplanned) addition of a gate at the site is an unwelcome addition...

Broadband: The PC continues to monitor and seek solutions to improving the broadband access in the village. During the year, a new BT cabinet has appeared at the end of The Street and therefore it may be that at least residents could be benefitting from improvements at some point although this is only a partial solution.

Defibrillator: Finally, I have a suggestion for a useful addition to the Parish. I would like, if possible, to obtain at least one defibrillator in the village. I believe these are important and would like to gauge opinion of support – especially if we need to raise funds from donations – c£2k..?

The Parish Council continues to work hard on behalf of everybody in the village and continues to have an enviable reputation amongst other communities District Councils and parishes for continuing to support, challenge or argue strongly for or against proposals that our parishioners feel are important. My thanks to all members of the PC for the hard work and support they have given over this year. There currently remains a vacancy on the Council and I really hope that we can find someone willing to be co-opted to join us and bring some new experience and skills to the Parish.

4. Police report

In the absence of PC Magee the Clerk of the Council tabled his report. In the year to 31 March 2019 thirteen incident reports were received at the Police Control and Dispatch Centre.

Three crimes were recorded during this time (2 x ABH, 1 x other)

5. District and County Councillor reports

County Cllr David Harrison said he was pleased to have been able to fund the installation of the 'Village Gates'. Norfolk County Council annual budget is approx. £660million, most of which goes into Social Services. He said there had been a relentless series of cuts to county council funding, so much so that there is now no central government funding which means that the county council is more than ever reliant on Business Rates.

The Council has now returned to a system of Cabinet Governance.

District Cllr Steve Riley said he is continually impressed by the efforts of Oulton Parish Council over recent years – its reputation spreads far beyond its borders. The political balance of power at Broadland District Council has moved. Joint working with South Norfolk District Council continues to develop. BDC will have to use some reserves to offset the effect of cuts to its funding.

Issues facing Broadland generally are low wages, an ageing population, lack of affordable housing.

A company has now been set up to provide more housing without being a burden on council tax payers

All district councillors have been given a sum of £500 to help small community projects.

6. Other reports:

(i) Church: the congregation has slightly shrunk; they continue to work with the Old Chapel here; this year their 'walk of Witness' finished here in Oulton; the new electricity supply to the church has proved intermittent but it now thought the problems have been solved; theft of lead is obviously a priority in rural churches; Andrew Beane will be leaving his post this summer.

A coffee morning is held every first Wednesday of the month from 1030 to noon – all are welcome; 9th June, Oulton Hall Open Gardens, all profits to the church; 15/16th June, Craft and Music Festival at the Old Chapel; 7th July, Open Gardens

(ii) Box Day: will be held on 29th June, commencing at 4.00pm. There will be a Barn Dance, 'Oulton Creates' craft, artisans. Etc., Fancy Dress, Raffle

7. Residents' questions

None

The Chairman then thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 21.04